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General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Thursday, 24 September 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of El Salvador, His Excellency Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Calderón Sol (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to begin by expressing our sorrow at the loss of human life and the material damage caused by the inclemencies of nature in our sister nations of the Caribbean. We feel the greatest solidarity with them and urge the international community quickly and generously to provide them with emergency assistance to deal with this crisis.

We would like to extend to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to preside over this session of the General Assembly. We are particularly delighted by your election, as we enjoy excellent relations of friendship and cooperation with your country.

We would also like to extend our thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his work in promoting the objectives of the United Nations, particularly in the area of encouraging reform of this Organization.

We extend our thanks to the Secretary-General for his excellent work in discharge of his mandate in an extremely complex international situation in which a great variety of interests are represented.

This will be my last participation here as President of the Republic of El Salvador, and I should therefore like to reiterate our appreciation to this Organization for having been a decisive factor in the signing and verification of the Peace Accords that ended the armed conflict in El Salvador.

From the beginning of our Administration, we declared our political will and our Government's commitment to comply fully with the Peace Accords, and we are pleased to say we have done so, despite the difficulties and obstacles encountered along the way.

We can say that profound transformations have taken place in El Salvador, resulting in the replacement of authoritarianism, abuse of power and impunity by a system founded on strict respect for the law and the principles and values of democracy.

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The restoration of peace and the consolidation of democracy have enabled the state of law in El Salvador to be strengthened, guaranteeing full independence for the basic organs of the Government of our Republic, as well as respect for the rights of the individual. We have also been able to proceed with a strategy of economic and social development with emphasis on the eradication of the underlying causes of poverty.

El Salvador now has a solid economy that is growing progressively and is internationally recognized and trusted. We are carrying out a successful plan for modernizing the country, seeking greater efficiency, productivity and competitiveness; one important component of this approach is the elimination of State monopolies through the privatization of such sectors as energy, telecommunications and social security.

We are implementing an economic policy of promoting our exports and attracting foreign investment, with a view to stimulating production, creating more jobs and making better use of the opening of international markets.

We have focused on programmes for promoting human resources and the progress of communities, especially in the neediest and most vulnerable sectors of society. To this end, we have allocated increasing percentages of our national budget to education, health and housing. As part of our strategy for fighting against poverty, the National Department for the Family is carrying out support programmes for women, children and the elderly.

Because we attach great importance to the ecology, we have established a Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources and we have now adopted a special law on this issue, in the aim of seeking solutions to the serious environmental problems facing our country and the world.

We are pleased to report that currently we are carrying out consultations across the country on the conclusion of a draft basic agreement for a national plan, involving the general agreement of all the various representative sectors of El Salvador's society. Our greatest hope is that the national plan will encourage participation by all Salvadoran men and women in a common long-term undertaking in which the interests of all are intertwined, without distinctions or political or ideological conditions, and which will be established as the nation's second great political agreement, after the Peace Accords.

El Salvador fully supports Central American integration, and along with the other Governments and private sectors in the region we are updating our legal instruments and strengthening the institutions that make up this system of regional integration.

From a multilateral perspective, we can say that we have participated in and supported the declarations and plans of action adopted at international summits and conferences, responsibly shouldering our commitments in the areas of environment, human rights, social issues, development of women, rights of the child, population and the fight against drug abuse, *inter alia*.

The profound changes that have taken place in recent years have had a strong impact on the international system, including the United Nations, resulting in agreement on the need for restructuring so as to respond properly to and solve global problems, particularly those of the developing countries.

We believe that Member States must join forces, act in solidarity with each other, shoulder their responsibilities and reach agreements to promote the changes that are needed in the United Nations so that it can fully discharge its mandate.

We support implementation of the Secretary-General's proposals to complete the restructuring of the Secretariat, and we advocate a change in attitude so that there can be real reform in the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies.

We need a Security Council that is more transparent, democratic and representative, so that it can enjoy the support of all Members of the Organization, and accordingly can become more effective in adopting practical and efficient measures to prevent and resolve conflicts.

We are pleased that progress has been made in the political situation worldwide, but we must express our concern over the fragile state of peace and stability in some parts of the world as a result of continuing conflict, failure to implement agreements, deadlocks and possible breakdowns in peace processes, acts of terrorism, hostility and lack of trust among States.

We are concerned about the deadlock in the peace process in the Middle East, and we urge the parties to seek a swift solution in accordance with the agreements made.

The Preamble to the Charter states that the peoples of the United Nations are resolved to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to unite their strength for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, not all Member States are convinced of this or ready to put into practice these ideas so as to achieve the objectives that are of concern to us all.

The recent nuclear tests run counter to our efforts to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons. We have supported every initiative to ensure a safer world for our peoples, and, in a spirit of international solidarity, I am pleased to report that earlier this month El Salvador deposited its instrument of ratification on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We believe that terrorism in any of its manifestations is an affront to the civilized principles of the human race and constitutes criminal conduct, which we strongly condemn and which cannot be justified on political, ideological, philosophical, ethnic or religious grounds. We accordingly condemn the terrorist attacks in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Northern Ireland, which took innocent lives, wounded thousands and destroyed property.

That is why we support Security Council resolution 1189 (1998), which calls on all States and international institutions to cooperate with and provide support and assistance to investigations with a view to bringing to justice those who planned and carried out those reprehensible acts.

The Government of El Salvador recognizes and supports the efforts of the international community strongly to fight against drug abuse. We reaffirm our commitment made in the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and in the measures to enhance international cooperation, which we adopted during the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the drugs problem last June.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action will be important milestones providing an opportunity for us to think about the progress made and the effective enjoyment of fundamental freedoms. They also provide an opportunity for every State to renew its commitment to comply with the obligations it has entered into, as part of the international legal machinery that protects and promotes these rights.

El Salvador reaffirms its support for the restoration of the rights of the Republic of China on Taiwan as a State Member of this Organization because we believe it is a matter of justice to respect the sovereign will and aspirations of its people in accordance with the principle of universality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The changes that have occurred in the international arena since the end of the cold war have not narrowed the gap between the developed and developing countries — rather, the gap has become wider. The globalization, liberalization and interdependence that characterize the new international order are challenges and opportunities of which many of our countries cannot take proper advantage because of the constraints we face. Integrating into the competitive world requires resources, technology and financing that go well beyond the national capacities of the least developed countries. This situation can be overcome only with the participation of the countries that are better developed.

In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General said again that the volume of external assistance to the developing countries has declined steadily during the current decade, and much of what is given is not appropriate for or aimed at the needs of the recipient countries. El Salvador urges donor countries to try to increase their cooperation for development, and particularly urges the industrialized countries to facilitate access to their markets for products from less developed countries.

The great advances made in recent times in all areas of human knowledge highlight the need to make more of an effort to resolve the basic problems facing the majority of the world's population. If we truly wish to have a world free from poverty, war, drugs, crime, terrorism and environmental degradation, we must join forces so that together we can find new mechanisms and new paths of action that lead us to a swift solution to the problems and concerns of our peoples.

We appeal for the wisdom and help of the gods of the nations to ensure that in all corners of the earth peace, harmony, solidarity and progress will reign.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Calderón Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Petru Lucinschi, President of the Republic of Moldova

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Petru Lucinschi, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Moldova, His Excellency Mr. Petru Lucinschi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lucinschi *(spoke in Moldovan; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation)*: Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am convinced that under your guidance this session will be crowned with success. I should also like to express my sincere gratitude to your predecessor, the representative of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for the skill with which he led this body during his term of office.

I should like to take this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts to promote the reform of the Organization for the benefit of the entire international community.

I have the honour and the privilege of addressing the General Assembly for the first time. From this lofty rostrum I should like to underline the importance the Republic of Moldova attaches to the role of the United Nations in the world.

In the new world structure, the United Nations is, for the Republic of Moldova, as it is for other States, the body that allows them to express their national identity and their own points of view in a framework with the largest possible audience and resonance. This is why my country takes an active part in debates on issues of importance to the international community, pertaining to the maintenance of peace and international security, to social and economic development, to the expansion of international and regional cooperation, to fighting terrorism and to increasing the role and effectiveness of the United Nations.

The far-reaching changes in international life at the end of this century have left their imprint on the activities of the United Nations. That is why we must strengthen and further improve the United Nations system so as to renew and adapt the Organization to the increased demands of international cooperation. Today, more than a year after the new initiatives were launched by the Secretary-General, we observe that his proposals, recommendations and specific measures for reforming the United Nations correspond to a large extent to these demands.

My delegation welcomes the progress achieved in the reform process of the United Nations, particularly in the economic and social spheres, and supports the measures to streamline and make more efficient the activities of the Organization. We believe that the merging of some structures, as well as decentralization and the transfer of authority to field offices will make an essential contribution to adapting the United Nations to new requirements. We believe that the debates during this session on proposals and measures for the restructuring of the entire United Nations system will have an impact on other areas of the Organization's activities.

The increase in the number of Security Council members is the crux of the overall reform of the United Nations. Since, thus far, we have not found generally acceptable solutions pertaining to the various aspects of the issue of reforming the Security Council, we believe that during this session Member States should show the same spirit of compromise as that shown by the Working Group on the Security Council question.

While taking into account the need to ensure better representation of Member States in the Security Council, the Republic of Moldova, as at previous sessions, continues to be in favour of a moderate expansion in the number of Council members. New permanent seats should be granted to developed countries such as Germany and Japan, as the Republic of Moldova has advocated at several previous sessions of the General Assembly, and possibly to developing countries as well.

Regarding the number of non-permanent seats, the Republic of Moldova is in favour of a reasonable increase in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical representation so as to reflect the interests of all regional groups. To our mind, an increase in the number of the

members of the Security Council in that category should take into account the legitimate interest of States of Central and Eastern Europe in having an additional, non-permanent seat since in recent years the number of States in that region has doubled.

Changes that have taken place in recent years in States with transitional economies, including the Republic of Moldova, have shown that political and economic changes involve risks and difficulties that affect several areas of society. Major problems, such as a decline in production, are too complex to be solved only with one's own resources.

In such circumstances, the role of the United Nations system in the economic and social spheres takes on a new dimension. The United Nations must remain the framework for international cooperation for all nations. This, in fact, is an absolute necessity in the current situation, in which financial crises have affected the economies of several countries, thereby jeopardizing their political and economic reforms.

Committed to the path of democracy, the Republic of Moldova is steadily striving to create basic institutions for the rule of law and the legislative framework necessary for transition to a market economy. As a result, we have been able to stabilize the macroeconomic situation and have reduced the annual inflation rate to 12 per cent.

My country takes an active part in international cooperation within the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the South-East European Cooperative Initiative, the Central European Initiative and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Similarly, the signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union has considerably diversified economic relations for the Republic of Moldova. My country also attaches crucial importance to its forthcoming adherence to the World Trade Organization.

Like other Member States, including those with economies in transition, the Republic of Moldova has taken part in United Nations projects in the economic and social sphere and is benefiting from the assistance and support of the United Nations to promote economic reform. This is why we greatly appreciate the activities of the United Nations Development Programme.

The economic decline in Asia has engendered a world economic crisis with devastating consequences. As the Secretary-General has said, the world economic crisis has been felt in Russia, in North America and in Europe. Today, major economies are increasingly feeling the impact of events taking place in less developed areas of the world.

In the process of the globalization of the world economy, the United Nations could serve as a coordinating centre for creating an international financial structure.

Managing the crisis and the effects of globalization also has particular importance for countries with economies in transition. Those States find themselves at the stage of moving towards a market economy, which requires the achievement of a whole set of objectives, such as macroeconomic stabilization, reform of price-setting mechanisms, restructuring of the major sectors of the economy, reduction of inflation, creation of new jobs and, last but not least, integration into the world economy.

Finally, it is important in our view that, in seeking solutions to the problems facing States with economies in transition, we should take into account first and foremost the specific characteristics of each country. We must take into consideration the fact that economic recovery in this category of countries is a complex problem because of the particularities of each State.

We hope that the United Nations will enhance its presence in States with economies in transition through regional economic commissions, as well as through funds and specialized agencies. We also deem it useful in this regard to consider the question of the integration of the economies of countries in transition into the world economy.

In the context of the debate on reform in the economic sphere, I wish to note that my country supports decisions adopted by the General Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council regarding an increase in development assistance and effective coordination of activities of the regional commissions with other bodies of the United Nations system.

The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is yet another reason to intensify efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world. The Republic of Moldova greatly appreciates United Nations human rights activities and supports the reform

measures that have been adopted, in particular those pertaining to strengthening the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

My country attaches special importance to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Republic of Moldova has acceded to the major international legal instruments on human rights adopted within the framework of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Our Parliament has ratified a series of international conventions such as the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights. The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova has adopted more than 20 laws dealing expressly with human rights. Respect for and protection of human rights in my country are also safeguarded by the Constitutional Court, which has the final say on the Constitution, by the principle of the separation of powers, and by the responsibility of the State towards its citizens.

The major events of the past decade have had a considerable impact on the situation in various parts of the world. Sometimes these events have been complicated by social tension and by serious violations of human rights, and have even given rise to armed conflicts.

It is known that the conflict in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova in the summer of 1992 was caused by the dismantling of the USSR and that it was supported by forces wishing to preserve the old political system. Unfortunately, we were unable to avoid that tragic situation. Even though the conflict has ceased, its consequences remain. There has been no final settlement of the conflict, and to some extent this is an obstacle to the process of the democratization of society and to the promotion of democratic reforms. Serious human rights violations continue in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova. Members of the Ilascu group have not yet been released; in the meantime, Prisoner Ilascu has actually been elected as a Deputy in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. The efforts of the Republic of Moldova to settle this conflict peacefully, and my country's readiness to grant that region special status with broad authority, on the condition that it respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, are well known.

But I have to recall that we are still facing difficulties in the negotiating process that took place with the cooperation of the OSCE and representatives of the Russian Federation and of Ukraine as mediators. The irreconcilable position of the separatist leaders has blocked the full implementation of agreements signed with the help of the mediators, which were intended to be interim documents that could help renew negotiations and increase trust among the parties. The situation is further aggravated by the presence in the region of vast quantities of weapons and ammunition and vast numbers of foreign troops.

However, on 21 October 1994 the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation signed an agreement on the withdrawal of armaments and military personnel. Unfortunately the Russians have yet to ratify that agreement. Implementation of the agreement would be in line with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, which stipulates the neutrality of our State and bans the deployment of foreign troops on our territory.

We believe that the immediate withdrawal of these vast quantities of weapons and ammunition would considerably strengthen stability in the region while facilitating the process of settling the crisis. In that context, we hope that the OSCE mission in the Republic of Moldova and the mediator States, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, will intensify their efforts to bring about the resumption of negotiations in conformity with the principle of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, and that they will contribute to the withdrawal of the weapons, ammunition and troops. This would defuse the conflict and would create conditions propitious for its final settlement. Finally, I state solemnly that the Republic of Moldova remains open to dialogue and will continue to try to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. We hope that common sense will prevail.

The problems facing humankind as we come to the end of this century are many and complex. Although the threat of another world war has been diminished, humanity must face a multitude of conflicts and tensions that jeopardize peace and stability in many parts of the world.

I believe that we must make use of all our experience, and focus all our efforts to resolve current crises and to prevent conflicts. In my view, we can face today's challenges and ensure world peace and security only through joint action by the international community. At this stage of ongoing globalization, the United Nations, with its universal mission, remains the principal forum in which to find solutions to crucial issues. My country is ready to cooperate with all other Member

States to strengthen the Organization's capacity better to meet the challenges of the coming millennium.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Petru Lucinschi, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdulsalami Abubakar, Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Mr. Abdulsalami Abubakar, Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdulsalami Abubakar, Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abubakar: I bring greetings, Sir, from the Government and the people of Nigeria, on whose behalf I am honoured and privileged to address this fifty-third session of the General Assembly, which is taking place under your presidency. Your election to the presidency is an expression of the confidence which Member States repose in you and a measure of our faith in your capacity to bring to bear on the work of the Assembly your wisdom, competence and diplomatic skills. I congratulate you most warmly on your election and also wish you a very successful tenure.

My delegation would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the affairs of the fifty-second session.

We also take this opportunity to express our immense satisfaction with the way Secretary-General Kofi Annan has steered the affairs of our Organization. We wish to assure him of our fullest support and cooperation as he leads our Organization into the twenty-first century.

The United Nations represents the will of all mankind to collectively seek solutions to the common problems facing our world. It demonstrates the ingenuity of the human spirit to assemble the diverse peoples of the world in a collaborative effort to attain the goals of international peace and security, promotion of socio-economic development, respect for human rights, good governance and rule of law. Our active participation in the affairs of this Organization since independence in 1960 is indicative of our belief in its continued relevance as a unique institution where all nations — big and small, rich and poor, developed and developing — meet on the basis of equality and mutual respect to harmonize their interests and policies for the common good.

It is for this reason that we have continued to demonstrate our commitment to work in collaboration with Member States for the strengthening and revitalization of the United Nations and its agencies. We therefore believe strongly that the issue of reform and democratization of the United Nations must be brought to the front burner. Reform is a continuing process and is consistent with the rapid changes taking place in our world. Our Organization will become irrelevant if it fails to adapt its structures and management style to present-day realities. In this regard, my delegation wishes to commend Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, for his dedication and steadfast commitment to the cause of reform, and the generally positive attitude of Member States to the critical issues of reform and democratization of the United Nations.

However, we must admit that substantive progress has been very slow because of the narrow positions which some delegations and regional groupings have continued to take on the fundamental issues of reform and democratization of the United Nations. We therefore urge all Member States to demonstrate urgent political will in this task of renewing the Organization for the next millennium by working out mutually acceptable compromises that will move the reform process forward. In doing this, we shall be able to build an Organization with the capacity and the potential to make our world safer and more prosperous.

With regard to the particular issue of the reform and democratization of the Security Council — a subject to which my country, being one of the original sponsors of the relevant resolution, attaches great importance — I am disheartened to note that no tangible substantive progress has been made five years after the creation of the Open-ended Working Group on the subject. We note here again that mistrust and suspicion among States thwarted any visible movement towards a successful outcome. Yet the status quo is not in the best interest of the general membership of the United Nations. Surely, the Council needs to be restructured, its membership expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and its working methods, decision-making methods and decision-making processes improved. This is the path towards the democratization of the Council, which will thereby enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of its decisions on critical issues of global peace and security.

My delegation is also of the strong view that the reform of the Security Council must also touch on the proper relationship between the Council and the General Assembly. The Charter of the United Nations assigns to the Security Council primary, but not exclusive, responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security; hence, there is also a role here for the General Assembly. Unfortunately, however, the voice of the General Assembly, which is the most democratic organ of the United Nations, is often drowned out by that of the Security Council on issues of global peace and security.

On the specific issues of the composition and size of the Council, my delegation continues to assert that the current anomaly of African non-representation in the permanent membership category must be corrected as a matter of urgency, as our continent, with its 53 Member States, collectively constitutes almost one third of the entire membership of the United Nations. In this context, the decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to seek two permanent seats for Africa in a reformed and expanded Council can simply not be ignored. The demand is legitimate, credible and made with a full sense of responsibility and relevance in the international system. It deserves the full support of all Member States.

It is our deep conviction that a world without the United Nations would be inconceivable, especially in the wake of renewed conflicts in several parts of the globe. In this regard, it is a matter of concern that Africa accounts for a disproportionate share of global conflicts, with their implications for human suffering and deprivation. The scale of human tragedies arising from conflicts within and among African States is alarming. We are pleased to note that the Security Council is currently giving special consideration to the causes of conflict in our continent, with a view to identifying how the international community could work in partnership with us to resolve them. This initiative to focus attention on the need for a renewed and concerted international effort to promote peace and stability in our continent is clearly unprecedented and deserves our commendation.

Nigeria's role in the furtherance of the objectives of the United Nations, especially in the field of peacekeeping and peace-building, is well known. We have made great efforts in the promotion of peaceful resolution of conflicts in parts of Africa where innocent lives and property have been dangerously at risk. Nigeria has joined hands with like-minded States to restore law and order. This was the case in Liberia and, most recently, in Sierra Leone, where President Tejan Kabbah was restored to his position as the democratically elected President in March this year.

This was the first time in the recent history of Africa that a democratically elected regime overthrown by a military coup was restored as a result of a collective action in a subregion. As the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria is proud to have provided the leadership within the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for the collective subregional efforts which resulted in that epoch-making event.

I should like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the international community for its overwhelming support during the crisis, which helped, in no small measure, to demoralize the rebel forces and speed up the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Sierra Leone. The war in Sierra Leone is over; the same can be said of Liberia, but the threat remains. We therefore urge the international community and international humanitarian organizations to take an active interest in rehabilitation efforts in the two countries. A lot remains to be done there.

Currently our subregional grouping, through its Committee of Seven, is actively involved in restoring peace in Guinea-Bissau, where a rebel group took up arms against the elected Government. It joined efforts with like-minded groups and a result a ceasefire was agreed upon a few weeks ago. We are optimistic that this agreement will hold.

We have also helped to create within the Organization of African Unity a continent-wide Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. This facility enjoys wide support. However, it has been unable to live up to the lofty ideals for which it was set up, owing largely to inadequate resources in terms of military hardware and funding. We invite the international community and other interested bodies to support the cause of peace and security in Africa through the OAU regional and subregional instruments for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Nigeria is disturbed by the escalation of terrorist activities in many parts of the world. The recent tragic bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, where some 260 innocent lives were lost, have brought home graphically to us all the fact that no country or society is immune from the activities of terrorists. We condemn these bombings. Terrorism is one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. It constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. We must enhance international cooperation to combat and eliminate it in all its manifestations. We must reflect our common concern for this problem through support for an international convention on terrorism.

My Administration came to the helm in Nigeria last June and began its short tenure with a few clear-cut objectives and policy thrusts. The most important is the design and implementation of a transparent, free and all-inclusive programme of transition to civil rule within the shortest time-frame. This decision was welcomed by the political class.

Our goal is to return our country to a democratically elected civilian government on 29 May 1999. To this end, we inaugurated the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 11 August 1998, with full powers to organize and manage the various stages of the electoral process without pressure or interference from any external body or authority. There are no restrictions to the formation of political parties, and several political parties are already seeking registration. The party registration guidelines just issued by INEC emphasize the role of the electorate as the ultimate determinant of the existence and success of political parties. This is democracy par excellence and confirms the confidence of Nigerians in INEC.

Furthermore, the Independent National Electoral Commission has published the timetable for the various elections in the Transition Programme, beginning with the local government elections in December 1998 and culminating in the presidential elections scheduled for 27 February 1999. We are committed to sustaining the independence, integrity and transparency of INEC. Every stage of the elections may be freely observed by international monitors from the United Nations, the Commonwealth and other interested bodies. These measures will ensure the credibility and integrity of the whole electoral process. In this regard, we note with satisfaction that both the United Nations and the Commonwealth have already dispatched assessment teams to Nigeria to meet with INEC officials with a view to reaching agreement on the modalities and the substance of cooperation between the Commission and the two organizations.

The draft constitution presented by the National Constitutional Conference in 1995 has now been published and will be ready for wide circulation in due course. All comments and views arising from the public will be duly presented for consideration prior to promulgation.

I am aware that on the question of human rights observance, Nigeria has recently been the subject of international attention. It is the objective of my administration, with the support and understanding of the international community, to move Nigeria in the direction of fullest respect for fundamental human rights, good governance, accountability and rule of law. This commitment to human rights has been amply demonstrated by the release of political detainees, the granting of pardons to some convicted persons and the withdrawal of charges against others. The general level of individual freedom, in particular freedom of expression and association, has greatly improved. The cases of people who are being detained and have not been arraigned before the courts and of a certain class of persons already convicted for offences are being examined, and appropriate decisions will be taken. Already, the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice of the Federation, in conjunction with the Minister of Internal Affairs and the National Commission on Human Rights of Nigeria, have zoned the country for the purpose of accelerating the decongestion of prisons.

We wish to reiterate our call on those Nigerians who are currently in self-imposed exile to return and participate in the political and economic development of our country. With our quest to improve our socio-economic infrastructure and climate for governance, we will conduct a census of Nigerian professionals and those

with special talents currently excelling worldwide with a view to harnessing all of the country's human resources.

I have also visited all our military formations to reconfirm the commitment of the armed forces and police to the democratization programme. The officers and men of the Nigerian armed forces and police, like the majority of our people, yearn for democracy in a united and peaceful country. They are overwhelmingly in support of our democratization programme.

I stand before this body as the leader of a country which is now fully engaged in a genuine and irreversible process of transition to democracy. Therefore, having honoured our commitment to the restoration of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of our people and advanced the prospects of democratization in Nigeria, we now call on the Western countries to lift the sanctions which some of them have imposed on our country. Today, perhaps more than ever before, we require the support and understanding of all the friends of Nigeria and the international community as a whole to help us in the implementation of our programmes and policies aimed at uplifting the living standards of our people.

In conclusion, a silent but peaceful revolution is taking place in Nigeria. Our people are determined to ensure that sustainable democratic governance is established in the country. Nigeria is clearly at the threshold of a new beginning in its domestic political and socio-economic structure and its foreign relations agenda. This is the time, therefore, for the international community to give the necessary encouragement and support for our endeavours.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdulsalami Abubakar, Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco was escorted to the rostrum.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Crown Prince Albert (Monaco) *(interpretation from French)*: The principality of Monaco is particularly pleased that you, Mr. President, are carrying out the high functions and responsibilities of this fifty-third session of our General Assembly. Your election by acclamation bears witness to the confidence that the international community has placed in your personal qualities and in your experience. It is also a manifestation of the respect that Member States have for your country, Uruguay.

I would also like to include the newly elected members of the Bureau in my cordial congratulations to you and in the wishes for success that I extend to you.

It is also a pleasant duty for me to pay a most earnest and sincere tribute to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, who presided with such great talent and effectiveness over the fifty-second of the Assembly.

Geography often dictates the fate of a nation. This is particularly true for the Principality of Monaco, whose life and development for centuries have depended on the sea. So it is that my country has always attached great importance to all issues concerning the sea. In fact, we host several institutions devoted to the marine environment.

In this International Year of the Ocean, it seems fitting to recall that the Principality is also celebrating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Prince Albert I of Monaco, one of the founders of

oceanography, to whom our country owes a great deal of its renown.

My illustrious forebear, born in 1848, devoted a substantial part of his life to the scientific study of the oceans. An accomplished and passionate seaman, he was a pioneer during 30 years of scientific study that led him from the Azores to Spitzberg.

Prince Albert I created in Monaco in 1910 the Oceanographic Museum in order to share what he had learned from his maritime expeditions and to reveal the beauty and wealth of the marine environment. Previously, in Paris in 1906, he had founded the Oceanographic Institute, which, in the same spirit, he devoted to teaching and research.

He was also a forerunner of oceanology, in that some of his work or his insights led to major medical discoveries, such as anaphylaxis and antibacterial action. By advancing research on what he called the meteorology of the upper atmosphere of the oceans, he paved the way for studies of oceanic atmospheric exchanges and their impact on climate.

Following his example, we should encourage climatological studies in order to prevent as much as possible such tragic flooding as that which — victimizing too many people — rages today in Bangladesh, in China and in the Chiapas region in Mexico. This is not to overlook, of course, hurricane Georges, which is now striking the Caribbean islands with such force.

In responding to the wishes of the Ninth International Oceanographic Congress, on 30 March 1910 Prince Albert I brought together a special commission to propose a programme for the scientific exploration of the Mediterranean. Because of the First World War, the general constitutive conference could not be held until 1919, in Madrid. In the presence of representatives of eight States with coasts on the Mediterranean, the programme and working methods of the international commission for the scientific exploration of the Mediterranean were established. The comprehensive activities of this institution, unique in nature and mission, continue today. The institution brings together very high-level political leaders and scientists. Last June in Croatia it held its thirty-fifth meeting. Prince Rainier III, my father, who is now the Chairman, took that opportunity to again express his confidence in the scientific community, encouraging it not to underestimate the influence it might have on political decisions, especially in the area of maritime affairs.

It is in this spirit that we attach special interest to the work conducted by the Independent World Commission on Oceans, under the leadership of the former President of Portugal, Mario Soares. We hope that its conclusions, which are essential for the lasting conservation of our marine heritage, will receive all the attention they deserve.

Inspired by the scientific work of Prince Albert I, Prince Rainier III, my father, and his Government have in recent years continued and strengthened his visionary policy. Two examples are the scientific centre established in 1960 and the RAMOGE agreement signed with France and Italy so as to prevent all types of pollution — which are numerous in the Ligurian Sea.

Furthermore, since last 27 March the Principality has had a law that brings together in one legislative body all provisions relating to the law of the sea, conforming them to the legal and technical requirements of the contemporary maritime world — first and foremost to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other relevant international instruments to which Monaco is a party.

We are also very much involved in activities carried out by the International Whaling Commission. Our efforts recently led to the establishment of 40 degrees south as the boundary of the new southern sanctuary designed to ensure protection for the feeding and reproduction grounds of 90 per cent of large whales. The Governments affected by this decision have committed themselves to limit the number of so-called scientific hunting permits in order to protect effectively this sanctuary.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I would like, furthermore, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to fresh threats to the marine environment posed by new synthetic chemical products, such as dioxins and certain pesticides which affect the neurological and brain development of many species. Large amounts of these products are now found in the flesh of fish and other marine vertebrates in the northern hemisphere, presenting an imminent threat not only to the balance of marine biodiversity but also to the health of the human race. I am thinking in particular of the Beluga whales, now among the most poisoned animals on our planet.

The substantial contribution of Prince Albert I to progress in oceanography should not allow us to forget his research in other areas, such as the study of prehistory. Thanks to discoveries made in coastal caves, it has enabled us to identify one of the links in human evolution, which has helped to establish scientifically the common origin of the human race. These fossils, along with other archaeological objects found in the caves of the region, are preserved in the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology, which the Prince created in 1902 in Monaco. Just as he had established the Oceanographic Institute in Paris to promote marine sciences, Prince Albert I gave the French capital an Institute of Human Paleontology, where since 1910 courses have been given and interdisciplinary research has been conducted on geology, prehistoric paleontology and ethnography.

Like many scholars, Prince Albert I did not limit his activities to research. He felt the profound need for communication, teaching and propagation of knowledge. He gave talks in Italy, Belgium, Spain and Austria. He inaugurated congresses in Paris, Bordeaux and Washington. One could also see him in the outskirts of the French capital giving night classes to workers enrolled in the People's University of Paris. Prince Albert I probably anticipated the immense enthusiasm with which at the beginning of the 1960s men and women of all disciplines and a large part of the peoples of the world were to come together in favour of ecology — that is, respect for nature, its balance and the interdependence of the beings that live in it. Since the beginning of the century he had perceived some of the bases for an environmentalism which was both popular and scientific and which he himself tried to put into practice.

So it is that his temple of the sea, the Oceanographic Institute Museum of Monaco, was, on his initiative, surrounded by superb gardens containing original and varied Mediterranean species. Also very interested in botany, he established on the rocky, arid coast of Monaco an exotic garden open to the public where we find succulent plants, some very rare and endangered, preserved with great care. My ancestor was to some extent a forerunner of those involved in the defence of biodiversity.

A profound believer in justice and an ardent defender of universal friendship, Prince Albert I in 1903 also created in Monaco the International Institute for Peace, where he brought together jurists, economists, philosophers and scientists to whom he assigned the mission of considering "ways of solving disputes between nations, propagating dedication to methods for bringing about harmonious understanding, and eradicating hatred from the hearts of peoples". Forty-two years later these words echoed in the preamble to the United Nations Charter adopted in San Francisco.

The Academy for Peace and International Security, which meets regularly in Monaco, perpetuates, on the initiative of my father, the reigning Prince, the determination of Prince Albert I to promote research on peace and the causes of conflict as well as the study of war. Its thirtieth session, which I was pleased to open on 19 March, devoted its work to globalization and international security. The discussions were led by high-ranking personalities from the worlds of diplomacy, defence and business, as well as by representatives of major international organizations. Its recommendations and conclusions essentially deal with the risks of tension and conflict inherent in the globalization of the economy and the best ways to overcome these risks.

The interest in humankind expressed in his research on primitive man and his environment, his commitment to scientific knowledge and its spread, his rejection of violence and his tireless fight for peace and respect for nature are all very contemporary messages which Prince Albert I bequeathed to us. This was the meeting of a human life with history, and his multidimensional legacy has come to us through time. He has influenced the minds of the people of Monaco, generation upon generation, in making us a welcoming, peace-loving people, respectful of our environment. Enriched by and adapted to world developments and progress by his successors, primarily my father, this heritage is now at the core of essential missions which we have entrusted to the United Nations. My country, within its modest means, is more prepared than ever to make its experience, inherited from its difficult past, available for understanding and rapprochement.

The defence of human rights and respect for human dignity, which are inscribed in letters of gold in the United Nations Charter, were no doubt of inspiration to Prince Albert I when he personally committed himself to the rehabilitation of Captain Dreyfus and when he decided to grant constitutional political rights to his subjects in 1911.

These fundamental human rights are being commemorated by the international community today. This is a great event. Fifty years ago, on 10 December 1948, our General Assembly at its third session, held in Paris at the Palais de Chaillot, adopted the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights. One of those primarily responsible for it, the French professor René Cassin, received in 1968, 20 years after the solemn proclamation, the Nobel Peace Prize. This commemoration should be an opportunity for collective soul-searching. To what extent are human rights enjoyed internationally? Above all, what is the position with regard to the initiatives taken to realize the right to development, which was officially recognized in 1993 by the international community at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna?

The current fierce economic competition which is aggravating macroeconomic imbalances is not without an impact on the enjoyment of human rights. While respect for civil and political rights seems to be less affected, economic, social and cultural rights underpinning the right to development have made only modest progress — where they have not, indeed, met with major setbacks.

The current financial crisis is depriving millions of men and women of their basic rights, when not actually destroying their lives. At the world level, it has led to an overall drop in life expectancy, an increase in infant and maternal mortality, greater unemployment, growing insecurity, uncontrolled migration and a grave deterioration in social welfare, accompanied by a relentless drop in income among the active population. The high-level dialogue on the theme of the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications, which was held in this Hall on 17 and 18 September, clearly stressed these facts.

Human rights are indissoluble. They must be enjoyed by everyone everywhere. As the General Assembly proclaimed on 10 December 1948, they are a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. The highest authorities of my country, along with the entire Monegasque people, are thoroughly convinced of this.

One thought comes to mind. It may be a lengthy one, since the question is delicate and quite complex. The Government of the Principality is perfectly well aware that urgent and concrete steps must be encouraged at the national and global levels. Mrs. Mary Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has our full support and all our confidence. We know how difficult her task is and how pitiful are her resources in the face of reality.

The Principality of Monaco also attaches the highest importance to the tireless and courageous work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which, I am pleased to recall, received the Nobel Peace Prize nearly 45 years ago in 1954. Mrs. Sadako Ogata and her colleagues deserve our support and respect.

The United Nations humanitarian activities, which are necessary today as never before, and its efforts to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and the human tragedy they entail also deserve our greatest encouragement.

I wish here to emphasize the special interest which my father, the Sovereign Prince, and I, President of the Red Cross of Monaco — currently celebrating its fiftieth anniversary — attach to respect for and strict implementation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. Despite the tireless efforts of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as of many humanitarian organizations that I wish to commend here for the altruism and courage of their members, we note an increase in serious violations of this text, as well as of the most basic human rights of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including children.

Last June, the Security Council rightly expressed its grave concern at the terrible consequences to children of armed conflict. It energetically and unequivocally condemned the abuses to which they are subject, especially the humiliations, outrages, sexual violence, kidnapping and displacements, as well their recruitment and use in combat, in violation of current international law. The authorities of Monaco unreservedly share that position and are prepared to lend active support, to the extent of their abilities, to the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict so that he may fulfil his noble mission.

Unfortunately, the fate of children may be equally tragic outside armed conflict. Following the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996, the Government of Monaco, as I stated to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, has striven to reform its criminal legislation in order to bring it into line with its commitments. In implementation of article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Monaco is Party, new legislative provisions have been enacted, with broader scope to criminalize to the greatest possible extent the sexual exploitation of children to satisfy the vices of others.

The establishment, last July in Rome, of an International Criminal Court is a source of great hope. This represents major progress, a far-reaching change in the international order that fosters respect for the essential principles of humanitarian law. Its Statute, adopted by a large majority, opens the way to the prosecution of war crimes and the most heinous crimes against humanity, many of which affect children, of course, but also woman and the defenceless elderly. The Principality of Monaco, which participated in the Diplomatic Conference in Rome, welcomes this historic decision.

The Royal Government is grateful that such weighty issues as the definition of crimes, the principle of complementarity, jurisdictions, the independence of the prosecutor's office and relations with United Nations organs were all solved satisfactorily.

I also wish to express on behalf of my country our great satisfaction at the work which the Secretary-General has done in recent months. The reports he submits to us note progress in many areas, including administrative and financial management and the restructuring of the Secretariat. Outstanding progress has been achieved thanks to the trusting and close cooperation he has established with representatives of Member States and with officials of the most influential international world and regional bodies.

His diplomatic initiatives, carried out with great wisdom, patience and determination, have often been crowned with success, despite the obstacles and difficulties he has encountered. We are especially pleased that, in come cases, his initiatives have allowed us to prevent or stabilize conflicts that might otherwise have been extremely devastating.

The Secretary-General's well-written and incisive report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa has riveted our attention. It is a valuable source of inspiration and ideas for bringing peace to Africa.

In this respect, I cannot fail to recall that we are commemorating this year the fiftieth anniversary of peacekeeping operations. It was in 1948 that the first United Nations observer mission was established. I take this opportunity to pay a tribute to all those men and women who have served under the United Nations flag and to salute the memory of those who gave their lives in the line of duty. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld was among them. More recently, in Kabul, an Italian Lieutenant Colonel was killed and a French military adviser wounded. The Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, is more relevant than ever. Ten years ago, on 10 December 1988, United Nations Peacekeeping Forces received the Nobel Peace Prize. As I see it, this high distinction should be recalled on the occasion of this anniversary.

I would like to express great sadness felt in my country over the accident of Swissair flight 111. My saddest thoughts go to the victims of that accident, some of whom belonged to the great United Nations family. We share the grief of their loved ones.

Africa and Europe have recently experienced a tragic series of terrorist attacks that have taken a toll of hundreds of victims including women, children, elderly people, many of whom were present merely by chance. Those attacks have given rise to an inevitable escalation of the use of force and an increased risk of conflict. The authorities and people of Monaco have felt these painful events very deeply. Through me, they wish to reaffirm to the Governments concerned and to the families of the victims their solidarity and their deepest sympathy.

On 13 August 1995, the Security Council firmly condemned acts of terrorism, which they called an outrage. It recalled its statement of 31 January 1992, issued at its high-level meeting of heads of State and Government. The Principality of Monaco agrees fully with that position. It is perfectly aware that terrorism endangers not only the security of States and their citizens, but also international cooperation and peace. My country is more convinced than ever of the need to strengthen international cooperation, with a view to combating more effectively this scourge, which is a serious and tragic setback in relations among human beings, nations and peoples. It fully endorses the provisions of General Assembly resolution 52/165, adopted on 15 December 1997, and its provisions aimed at the elimination of international terrorism.

Our Government is now considering the possibility of adhering to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, which was adopted last year without a vote and which is currently open for signature. Furthermore, we hope that negotiations under way on a draft convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism will be concluded quickly.

In conclusion, it is my hope that the work of this fifty-third session of the General Assembly will be crowned with success and that the activities of the Organization will be strengthened in such vital areas as international security, disarmament, sustainable development and the protection of the environment.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Lamime Kamara.

Mr. Kamara (Guinea) *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of my delegation, I should first of all like to congratulate Mr. Opertti warmly on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. My country, the Republic of Guinea, is pleased with this expression of confidence, eloquent proof of the international community's recognition of the very positive role played by his country, Uruguay, in working for the noble ideals of our Organization. I am sure his personal qualities and great experience will ensure success at this session.

I should also like to take this opportunity to convey our great appreciation to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, for the skill, open-mindedness and efficiency of his presidency.

I should also like to extend to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the confidence of the Government of Guinea, which greatly appreciates his perceptiveness, his great wisdom and his hard work, which together are opening up new horizons for this Organization.

Despite encouraging results in many areas, the United Nations still faces many challenges that threaten international peace and security and jeopardize the sustainable development of nations. It is the responsibility of the United Nations, in accordance with its purposes and principles, to become more involved in the enduring search for peace, so that the human race, on the eve of the third millennium, can establish a real foundation for the prosperity of all States.

How can one ensure peace and the harmonious development of our States if the international community will not firmly commit itself to identifying and eradicating the deep causes of the many conflicts and imbalances that continue to impede mankind's progress towards greater well-being? At a time when we are preparing to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the world's conscience is still troubled by the indifference of the major players in the international arena in the search for appropriate solutions to the challenges that face us all.

In a number of countries, peoples and individuals are deprived of fundamental rights. Civil wars continue to cause great suffering to innocent victims. It has been shown that respect for fundamental rights, including promotion of the right to development, which underlies all other rights, is an excellent instrument of preventive diplomacy today.

Our session is opening at a time when the Middle East peace process is completely deadlocked. My country is following with great concern recent developments in that part of the world, particularly in the Arab territories occupied by Israel. My delegation is convinced that unless the rights of all the interested parties are taken into account, peace will remain elusive.

The search for peace in the Middle East is a matter of concern to all States, first and foremost the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which on several occasions has called on the Security Council and the General Assembly for greater United Nations involvement in achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East through the return of the occupied Arab territories, the creation of a Palestinian state and respect for the rights of all States in the region to peace and security.

My delegation appeals to all parties concerned, particularly the authorities in Tel Aviv, to ensure strict implementation of the Oslo and Washington agreements, with a view to saving peace and thereby avoid the threat of another crisis that jeopardizes the balance in the subregion and international peace as a whole.

The African continent continues to be a central concern of the international community. There is no need for me to enumerate the many internal conflicts that have occurred in Africa in recent years.

In West Africa, the collective awareness of the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of the need to make our subregion a zone of peace, security and stability has contributed, thanks to the resolve shown by our heads of State, to restoring peace in Liberia and has allowed for a return to constitutionality in Sierra Leone.

These achievements, which are the result of the unanimous desire of our peoples to manage their own affairs, also attest to the vitality of the institutions of regional integration as instruments for conflict prevention, management and resolution. Here, I would appeal to the international community for more cooperation with and assistance to the peacekeeping mechanisms initiated by subregional organizations.

There is a need to consolidate the great achievements of the restoration of peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone through massive assistance for their speedy reconstruction, the return of refugees and national reconciliation. If the young people who have been demobilized in these two countries do not quickly find some activity in civilian life, the temptation to return to disorder will remain. To strengthen peace and security in the West African subregion, the international community must help the economies of Liberia and Sierra Leone return to the path of growth.

While ECOWAS and the international community were seeking ways and means to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone and Liberia, another conflict erupted on 7 June 1998 in Guinea-Bissau. The Government of Guinea, which has always advocated dialogue and consultation to resolve conflicts, expressed, from the beginning of this crisis, its grave concern because of the geographic, historical, social and cultural ties uniting Guinea-Bissau and my own country.

The existence of a mutual defence assistance pact, signed on 25 January 1980, and the explicit invitation by the Guinea-Bissau's democratically elected President, President João Bernardo Vieira both justified the sending of a Guinean contingent to Guinea-Bissau to preserve constitutional order and help end the war. Faithful to our policy of peace and dialogue, the Government of Guinea has been working since the beginning of this crisis in the ECOWAS Committee of Seven to find a just, negotiated solution.

We believe that complementary action by the Economic Community of West African States and the contact group of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries will make it possible for us to achieve the objective of restoring peace and security in Guinea-Bissau.

If we are to preserve the achievements of democratization in Africa, the international community must adopt new, more binding legal instruments prohibiting any seizure of power by force and banishing those responsible for such actions at the international, regional and subregional levels. The implementation of such measures will help to strengthen preventive diplomacy and to preserve peace and security within our States, with respect for fundamental human rights.

I cannot end this section of my statement without mentioning the thorny issue of refugees and displaced persons, who are the victims of these crises. My country, the Republic of Guinea, because of its geographic location among three countries facing civil war, has of all the countries in the world the highest proportion of refugees within its territory. Over the last decade, Guinea has taken in more than 700,000 refugees, which is one tenth of our population. This massive and prolonged concentration of people has had serious social, economic and environmental consequences in the areas of Guinea concerned, and is weighing heavily on my country and its economy.

I would like to reiterate here the appeal made by the Government of Guinea for substantial assistance, in accordance with Security Council and ECOWAS resolutions to help the Republic of Guinea bear the burden of these refugees. On behalf of the Government of Guinea, I should like to express our gratitude to those States that have already responded favourably to this appeal.

Concerned about the situation, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme organized a special meeting on the Republic of Guinea on 9 and 10 July this year in New York. The Government of Guinea appreciated this welcome initiative by the Secretary-General. We greatly appreciated the recognition by the international community, through the United Nations system, of the great sacrifices made by the people of Guinea to help the refugees from neighbouring countries, and especially the will of the United Nations system to mobilize resources to strengthen Guinea's economic capacity and preserve its stability, so that we can continue to be a small island of peace and prosperity.

I should like to take this opportunity to urge multilateral partners, all our partners, to continue to pursue with us the activities undertaken in support of Guinea, particularly in the area of the environment, which has been seriously degraded by the long-term mass presence of refugees. The future of the water supplies of West Africa is at stake here.

The Republic of Guinea is closely following recent developments in the political situation in the Great Lakes region, particularly the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation is deeply concerned by the risk that the conflict will spill over into the subregion. We urgently appeal to all the parties to the conflict to call an immediate ceasefire and to respect the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with the recommendations of the summit of heads of State of the subregion held at Victoria Falls on 7 and 8 September this year.

Promoting the right to development is part of the overall search for greater prosperity for the human race. While tangible political progress has been made in Africa over the last decade, African States still face the challenge of development, indebtedness and the negative impact of a globalization which is not yet fully understood.

This terrible situation, aggravated by the negative impact of internal conflict, is significantly weakening our States and opening them up to new and dangerous forms of foreign greed. The implementation of a policy to gradually reduce the imbalances between rich and developing countries would contribute to the emergence of a true global market by the creation of centres of development on all continents.

Each country in the world should be given every opportunity for development and helped to become part of the world trade system. Despite considerable efforts by African countries towards political and economic restructuring, and towards strengthening their credibility and making their economies more competitive, the economic situation in Africa continues to be critical. If urgent and appropriate measures are not taken, the sacrifices made risk having been in vain.

My Government has already undertaken far-reaching political, economic and structural reforms and hopes that special attention will be given to the situation in Africa. We appeal to the international community and the developed countries to continue to increase official development assistance. Sustained assistance to African countries will enable them to consolidate what they have already achieved and thereby to enter the next millennium with a greater sense of calm. In this respect, the Agenda for Development should be strongly supported, with a view to its effective implementation.

The question of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is still a concern for my Government. While the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a significant step forward for the preservation of peace, recent developments in the international arena require the international community as a whole to consider more deeply the underlying causes of the nuclear arms race. It seems clear that as long as imbalances and injustices are not put right, the spectre of proliferation will continue to threaten international peace.

Countries that already possess nuclear weapons have a special responsibility for the preservation of international peace and must shoulder their responsibilities by taking a more active part in strengthening prevention and peacekeeping mechanisms, resolving existing or latent conflicts, ensuring more equitable treatment for States involved in conflict and, finally, making a more substantial contribution to the development of less fortunate nations.

The Government of Guinea believes that only general and complete disarmament can prevent the risk of proliferation. In the subregion of West Africa, the trade in small arms endangers the internal equilibrium of our States. Within the context of conflict prevention in West Africa, subregional cooperation is under way to eradicate this scourge. We invite the other regions of Africa to support this initiative and to work to establish appropriate structures in order to put an end to the illicit trade in small arms and make Africa a zone of peace and security.

The Republic of Guinea welcomes the adoption and signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The National Assembly of Guinea has already ratified this important Convention to show its support for the elimination of landmines, which cause so much suffering to innocent victims.

It is reassuring to note the greater awareness at the global level of the need to end drug-trafficking, whose many consequences dangerously threaten the prosperity of nations. The results of the recent world summit

meeting on drugs will doubtless enable us to further refine our methods to combat the production, distribution, sale and consumption of drugs, which are a real scourge.

The recent adoption in Rome of the Statute of the International Criminal Court was a major milestone in the progress of humankind towards the elimination of serious violations of humanitarian law committed during international or internal conflicts.

As our community prepares to enter the third millennium, it is now more necessary than ever to adapt the United Nations to the requirements of international life. The new challenges facing us will require the adoption of new, more appropriate arrangements to make the twenty-first century one of peace, justice and prosperity within the context of an equitable partnership that is beneficial to all nations.

My delegation is convinced that the United Nations is still the melting pot in which all nations can make their voices heard in the search for just and lasting solutions to their concerns. We therefore believe that the financial capacity of the United Nations must be strengthened. Contributions must be paid on time and in accordance with the established scale. To that end, we must, together, review the way in which the United Nations system functions with a view to adapting it to current and future circumstances.

My delegation believes in the need for the democratization of the United Nations through the restructuring of its principal bodies, such as the Security Council, whose current membership reflects the state of the world in 1945 and no longer corresponds to the political, economic and social realities of the world today. The reform of the principal bodies of our Organization must enable all States to use their national capacities to seek and consolidate international peace.

My country is more committed than ever to the honourable mission of our Organization as set forth in the Charter. Given the many challenges facing us, Guinea believes in the need for all of us to work together to strengthen and preserve humankind's vision of justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. That is what our peoples would have us do.

Address by Mr. Rafic Hariri, Prime Minister and President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Rafic Hariri, Prime Minister and President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Rafic Hariri, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Hariri (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I would also like to commend the efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, whom we recently welcomed to our country.

I should also like to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. He has been working tirelessly to promote the authority of the United Nations, advocating respect for the international legitimacy for which it stands, especially in the area of finding peaceful solutions to the explosive conflicts that are raging in some parts of the world. The international community has recognized his great achievement when he succeeded a few months ago in defusing an ominous military confrontation in the Arab Gulf region. We hope that this will be followed by similar successes in other volatile situations plaguing different parts of the world.

The hopes that are pinned on the United Nations assume a special meaning at this session, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an instrument which Lebanon participated in framing. Today, human rights are a major pillar of the new world order. Respect for human rights has become the yardstick by which the democracy practised in countries is judged. Compliance with the provisions of the Declaration under all circumstances and conditions guarantees not only the peace, security and stability of societies but also the establishment of relations of cooperation and understanding among States.

The United Nations is duty-bound to enhance its independence since it was liberated from the impact of the cold war and of the bipolarity which held sway over international relations in the post-Second World War era. Today, it is called upon to reactivate its role in making and consolidating peace. This task can be achieved primarily by addressing the root causes of conflicts, through preventive diplomacy and through various technical and development assistance programmes in various fields.

It is important here to refer to the fact that international institutions have an important role to play in providing the developing countries with the necessary technical assistance. Such assistance will enable them to take advantage of the accelerated pace of globalization in the field of trade and finance. It will also give these countries sufficient time to adapt and get ready to face the new challenges. This will help many developing countries avoid the negative effects of surging globalization, given the inadequacy of their production capabilities and the absence of a competitive edge. In this regard, Lebanon is effectively contributing to the establishment of a free trade zone specifically in the Arab region while continuing its commitment to the establishment of trade liberalization worldwide.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, the United Nations role requires it to fulfil the tasks of reform and streamlining so that it can keep up with the fast pace of international relations. Thus the reform measures initiated by the Secretary-General must be completed. Furthermore, the reform of the working methods and streamlining of the Security Council to increase its membership and make it more representative should also be completed. Once reformed, different States, particularly small States, will be enabled to participate in the decision-making process relevant to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We commend the efforts that went into the establishment of the International Criminal Court whose Statute was recently adopted in Rome. Lebanon supports the establishment of the Court and is determined to study its Statute positively.

More than ever before, the international community is called upon to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes, especially in extremely sensitive regions of the world. We need also to address the root causes of the problems and thereby to defuse the crises before they turn into full-scale conflagrations.

The time has come to solve pending problems, particularly those of the Middle East region. For instance, a settlement must be found to the question of the three islands in the Gulf disputed by the United Arab Emirates and Iran. Such a settlement should restore the disputed islands to their rightful owners and thus promote peace and stability among the States and the peoples of the region.

If we are truly interested in the promotion of regional and international peace and security, we must work in all seriousness to build a world free from weapons of mass destruction. In this context, we aspire and call for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Five years ago, I was privileged to stand here before the General Assembly to speak about Lebanon and about its commitment to a just and comprehensive peace. From this very rostrum, I declared that Lebanon is committed to the principles of democracy, liberty and human rights, and that it has succeeded in safeguarding these principles even through its darkest moments.

In this context, reference should be made to Lebanon's firm position of condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including political, cultural and economic. We condemn terrorism whether sponsored by States or by individuals. Lebanon condemns attacks against civilians, embassies and diplomatic missions, plane hijacking and any other act that jeopardizes the lives and property of civilians. However, we must stress the importance of distinguishing between terrorism and peoples' rights to resist the forces of foreign occupation in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in its successive resolutions adopted by the international Organization and other fora, especially the Declaration of the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations.

Lebanon is fully committed to the role of the United Nations and is keen on furthering this role and on safeguarding the equilibrium and integrity of international relations. We therefore believe that it is important for all States, large and small, to commit to the principles of international legitimacy and refrain from undertaking unilateral measures that are driven solely by narrow interests and dictated by expediency.

Today, as we reiterate these constant positions of principle, we can point with confidence to the originality

of our experience in coexistence, which is based on moderation and tolerance, and our firm belief in both deserves to be a living model that should be emulated whenever solutions are sought to the problems of societies afflicted with wars, racial or factional strife all over the world. This is particularly true of societies that are trying to restore civil peace as part of their post-conflict peace-building efforts.

Lebanon, with an open and creative society, a society that is Arab by identity and orientation, has remained united in territory, population and institutions; Lebanon has remained a vibrant oasis of goodwill and beneficial interaction.

As is well known, Lebanon has for the past few years embarked on a reconstruction plan following a protracted devastating war. It has been tirelessly working to regain the prominent cultural and economic position it once held in its region and in the world, depending on God Almighty, then on the will and resourcefulness of its own citizens and on the support of its brothers and the contributions of its friends all over the world.

Throughout this period of reconstruction, Lebanon faced difficult circumstances caused first and foremost by the continued Israeli occupation of parts of its territories and by the continuity of its devastating attacks against its villages and peaceful citizens. These attacks have claimed the lives of many innocent civilians, men, women and children, and wounded many many more. I am confident that the international community still remembers very well the Qana massacre perpetrated by Israel in 1996.

Lebanon has faced a critical stage of its history through the past few years while implementing the reconstruction plans. The only parallel to the intensity of this stage is the determination of the Lebanese people to face the various challenges on more than one front. Lebanon has succeeded in regaining the world's confidence in its ability to play once more a distinguished and shining role in the cultural, economic, commercial and financial fields. Beirut is back to its position as the crossroads of various cultures and civilizations, a fact attested to by the many conferences and the regional and international meetings that were convened there. The United Nations building that Lebanon has recently completed as the focal point for United Nations activities in Lebanon and in the region is proof, if any was needed, of Lebanon's keen interest in the return of international organizations to Beirut.

As an indication of international confidence in our performance, the world financial markets traded in treasury bonds issued by the Lebanese Government and institutions of the private sector. This was made possible by the cooperation between the Lebanese financial institutions and their international counterparts. It is a demonstration of the confidence that the world has in the present and future of the national economy and of the confidence of the Lebanese themselves in their country and its future.

But to date, Israel has not wanted to meet its commitments; it has not done what it promised to the Palestinians and to the international community; it does not want to resume the negotiations with Lebanon and with Syria from the point at which they left off.

We invite the institutions of the international community to play a more effective role in securing compliance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. They must bring the necessary pressure to bear on the aggressor to remove the causes of this conflict and lay the foundations of a just and comprehensive peace.

Israel cannot merely pay lip service to peace and expect to be considered a truly peace-loving State. Talking about peace is one thing; Israel's actions on the ground are another. Israel's claim that it is a weak country surrounded by hostile neighbours is one thing; Israel's military might, based on weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons and state-of-the-art Western weaponry, is another. Israel has all those weapons and is the mightiest Power in the Middle East. But it does not want to implement or respect the resolutions of international legitimacy.

We went to the Madrid Peace Conference with the other Arab parties sincerely hoping to achieve a just, permanent and comprehensive peace that would end the continued cycle of violence that has engulfed our region over the past 50 years. The negotiations on the Palestinian track remain in a vicious circle, and the repercussions of Israeli intransigence could very well shatter our hopes for peace; the negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks have come to a complete standstill as a result of the intransigent position of the Israeli Government.

We reaffirm our permanent commitment to the noble objective of achieving peace. We have previously declared that the accomplishment of this goal lies in the

full, immediate and unconditional implementation of United Nations resolutions. On this occasion, we reiterate our total rejection of any settlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. We call upon the international community to increase its voluntary contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) pending the implementation of international resolutions relative to refugees, particularly resolution 194 (III).

As we repeat our commitment to a just, comprehensive and permanent peace, we declare that we in Lebanon and in Syria are ready to resume the negotiations from where they were stopped. We are ready to sign a peace treaty with Israel within three months, on the condition that it withdraws from the South, from the West Beqaa, and from the Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967. Peace negotiations aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace — the peace that we always proclaimed our desire to achieve — can only be accomplished on the basis of the Madrid terms of reference, in accordance with the principle of land for peace. These should be pursued on two parallel, inseparable tracks with Israel: the Lebanese negotiation track and the Syrian negotiation track.

The interdependence of the twin tracks was a strategic decision dictated by the supreme interests of both Lebanon and Syria. This interdependence enhances the prospects of a just, permanent and comprehensive peace. We have previously declared, and we repeat today before this assembly of nations, that neither Lebanon nor Syria will sign a separate peace agreement with Israel. Lebanon and Syria are committed to the resolutions of international legitimacy. We continue to be committed to peace as a strategic choice.

Peace as we see it is a peace built on justice, a peace that will restore usurped rights to their rightful owners fully and without diminution. Any initiatives that ignore these principles and bases are nothing more than manoeuvres predestined to failure. They will only prolong the conflict with all that this implies in terms of squandering the human and economic resources of all concerned. They will further postpone the permanent, just and comprehensive peace which we still uphold and aspire to. To us, this will always be the only viable means to achieve the prosperity and progress of our people and of the other peoples of the region.

The voices that were recently raised calling for the establishment of military alliances in the region on the pretext of confronting certain trends of thought can only be seen as attempts to bring the region back to the atmosphere of alliances and confrontation. Time and again, history has proven these to be harmful to the interests of peoples. They can only lead to negative results that will obstruct the peace process.

So long as the Israeli occupation and assaults against our people continue, we shall continue to uphold our right to resist occupation and to use all legitimate means to which peoples who have had to endure the injustices and evils of occupation have resorted previously. The Lebanese resistance in southern Lebanon and the West Beqaa is in pursuit of a legitimate right supported and endorsed by the entire Lebanese people. The Lebanese people who, like other peoples whose lands have been occupied, have been resisting occupation, and appeal to the international community to spare no effort in helping to secure the release of its citizens who are incarcerated in Israeli prisons and in detention camps under Israeli control in the occupied Lebanese territories. Hundreds of our sons have been languishing in Israeli jails and detention camps for years. Some have already served the prison sentences handed down by Israeli courts, yet are still in custody for reasons unknown to anyone. Others have been in custody for years but have not yet been arraigned. Their incarceration continues under an arbitrary measure that Israel calls "administrative detention".

We have been trying to secure the release of all Lebanese detainees from Israeli jails with the assistance of friendly and brotherly States and with the active involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross. We appeal to the United Nations and to other international humanitarian agencies to give this matter their utmost attention. We also call upon them to plead with Israel to improve the living conditions of these prisoners, who live in unbearable, inhumane circumstances that run counter to international laws and conventions.

Lebanon finds itself today twice victimized. On the one hand, it has to endure continued devastating attacks by Israel, attacks that can be justified only under one rubric: Israel's stubborn clinging to its occupation and to the flimsy pretext of security. On the other hand, Lebanon sees how the international community is incapable of doing what it takes to restore its legitimate rights through compliance with the just resolutions adopted by this international Organization, in particular Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for

unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese territories. Lebanon, which for 50 years has dearly paid for the establishment of Israel, suffers from the double standards which have so far obstructed the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The United Nations, which has made continuous efforts, and whose peacekeeping forces have made the ultimate sacrifice, in the South, remains the best witness to the indiscriminate nature and ferocity of the Israeli attacks against the Lebanese. The United Nations peacekeeping forces have repeatedly been the direct target of Israeli bombardment, including the 1996 shelling of the headquarters of a battalion of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, in Qana, which was the scene of a heinous massacre in which scores of Lebanese lost their lives. Here we would like to pay tribute to the fallen soldiers of the United Nations who have died in Lebanon, victims of Israeli acts of aggression. Lebanon considers them to be its martyrs too. From this rostrum, we honour their memory. We salute each and every member of the United Nations peacekeeping Force stationed in Lebanon. We express special thanks and appreciation to the friendly States that have contributed troops to that Force. On the occasion of the departure of the Norwegian battalion that has worked in Lebanon for over two decades, allow me to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of Lebanon, our thanks and gratitude to the Norwegian people and Government for their enduring commitment to and participation in the Force. Many members of the Norwegian battalion sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.

Lebanon has the right to demand that the international community and the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy, should make every effort to secure Israel's compliance with international resolutions and its withdrawal from its territories.

Lebanon, which believes in peace, will work with its brothers to consolidate this peace and make it a foundation for a new life in the Middle East region. Achieving this noble objective will not only translate just resolutions into tangible action, but it will also further the confidence of small States and nations in an authority that will guarantee their rights, their very existence and their future.

In conclusion, I would like to address the Israeli people to tell them that the Arabs, specifically Lebanon and Syria, have taken a strategic decision, namely the peace option, which is the difficult choice. This is the strategic option which we uphold and for which we work in the interest of the future of our nation and that of our children. For peace to be realized, Israel also has to follow suit for the sake of the future of its children. Peace requires courage and a broad vision of the future. Lebanon and Syria have made their choice. Will Israel make the same choice?

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rafic Hariri, Prime Minister and President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Her Excellency Ms. Zdenka Kramplová.

Ms. Kramplová (Slovakia): First of all, I wish to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session and to express my sincere belief that under his leadership this session of the General Assembly will carry out successfully the tasks that the international community expects this global forum to deal with.

I would also like to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for his work and contribution to the successful completion of the last session of the General Assembly.

In this period of significant global political and economic changes, the world needs a modern and effective United Nations that is capable of dealing with issues of importance to all of mankind in a proper and flexible manner. Slovakia believes that the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations will contribute substantively to this goal. It gives its full support to the swift implementation of the reform measures initiated by the Secretary-General in his basic report on reform.

The Slovak Republic welcomes the proposal to designate the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly as the Millennium Assembly. We expect that the Millennium Assembly will provide Member States an opportunity to formulate answers to questions about the strategic goals of the United Nations for the next millennium in the field of international peace and security and economic cooperation. We assume that the report on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century that the Secretary-General intends to present to the

General Assembly in the year 2000 will provide a thorough evaluation of the results achieved in specific areas of United Nations activities.

The Slovak Republic supports a Security Council reform that would enhance its representative character, its working methods and the transparency of its work, as well as preserve the Council's capability to act promptly. The reform should result in an adequate representation of individual regional groups and accommodate a legitimate claim of the Eastern European regional Group and other States to a new non-permanent seat in the Security Council. Let us keep in mind that the number of members of the Eastern European Group has doubled over the past few years.

Slovakia supports the efforts to reach a consensus on the reform in the area of United Nations financing, favouring the principle of capacity to pay. In any case, much of the tension can be solved through the regular contributions by Member States to the relevant United Nations budgets.

The Slovak Republic supports the idea of the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy and is a strong advocate of unconditional and universal observance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Slovakia actively participates in the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, and in this context fully supports the universality of the NPT and the CTBT. In March of this year, Slovakia completed the ratification process of the CTBT. This confirms our active approach in this area.

We appreciate the highly qualified and objective expertise of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), both in the field of elimination of the nuclear military threat and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Slovakia fully supported the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency known as programme "93+2" for strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system. I have the honour to inform the Assembly that the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency approved at its session in September the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement between Slovakia and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Early entry into force of the additional protocol will be a high priority for Slovak authorities.

Slovakia pays very close attention to the issue of landmines. The ratification of the Ottawa Convention is in the internal legislative process. We believe that the Ottawa process and the Conference on Disarmament are complementary. Slovakia — which has experience in demining devices and technologies, and has capacities in education and training in mine clearance — would like to play an active role in the process of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

In the area of biological weapons, the Slovak Republic supports improving the verification system of the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as the elimination of the illegal transfer of these weapons.

Slovakia supports the efforts of the United Nations aimed at conflict resolution through the strengthening of United Nations capacities in the field of preventive diplomacy, early warning systems and effective use of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Slovakia's active participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations is proof of our continuing commitment. At present, Slovakia is participating in three peacekeeping operations, and it is prepared to provide troops to other missions as well.

My country supports the United Nations efforts to strengthen its capacity for rapid deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces, especially in further developing the concept of United Nations stand-by arrangements, as well as a rapidly deployable mission headquarters.

In the process of post-conflict peace-building, it is of the utmost importance that a multifunctional approach in close coordination with regional institutions and non-governmental and humanitarian organizations should be strictly observed.

One of the global problems that poses an ever increasing threat to humankind is terrorism. Slovakia has always rejected terrorism and strongly condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomsoever committed. The joint efforts of all States are a vital precondition for successful fight against this evil.

The year 1998 will witness two important human rights anniversaries — the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights. Both these events represent an appropriate framework and provide the impetus for the further

promotion, protection and development of human rights at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

In a year which will mark two important anniversaries in the field of human rights, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the country's accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which I had the honour to sign on 22 September last.

The Slovak Republic attaches great importance to international economic cooperation and to the important role of the Economic and Social Council in this process.

In the framework of regional cooperation, Slovakia favours respect for the specific needs of individual regions. We welcome, therefore, the activities of the Economic Commission for Europe aimed at broadening cooperation with the private business sector and non-governmental organizations. Slovakia is interested in a more intensive participation in the development programmes of the United Nations specialized institutions and is preparing its own concept of development assistance, whose objective is to increase Slovakia's participation in programmes for developing countries.

The Slovak Republic, as a member of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, takes an active approach to issues of environmental protection and sustainable development.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/201, the Government of the Slovak Republic offered to host the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bratislava this year. In total 169 parties to the Convention took part in the Conference under the presidency of the Minister of the Environment of the Slovak Republic. The successful outcome of the Conference reaffirmed the commitment of all parties to conserve biological diversity for future generations. The fact that the Government of the Slovak Republic hosted that Conference confirms the importance we attach to the protection of environment and sustainable development.

As an emerging donor country, Slovakia is investigating ways of providing humanitarian assistance on a bilateral basis. A very important element in the process of humanitarian assistance, especially in crisis regions, is ensuring the security of humanitarian personnel, and the Slovak Republic is ready to give its support to all United Nations measures aimed at reinforcing this security.

The recent twentieth special session of the General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem together was an important milestone in the joint efforts of the international community in the fight against drugs. It is a great achievement that for the first time in history a consensus was reached between producer and consumer countries on the need to eliminate the threat of drugs through parallel and considered action in both priority areas: decreasing the demand for drugs and decreasing the production of drugs.

To coordinate drug control activities at the regional level, the Slovak Republic is ready to secure the establishment in Bratislava of a regional United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) office for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

We appreciate that the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court in Rome was successfully completed, and we believe that in the foreseeable future a permanent criminal court will be established in order to punish the most serious crimes against humanity and, moreover, to prevent them.

We believe that progress in the preparation of an international legal document on the elimination of nuclear terrorism will be achieved during this session of the General Assembly. We also expect further substantial progress in the discussion on the jurisdictional immunity of States and State property prepared by the International Law Commission.

The United Nations contributes not only to the progressive development of international law and its codification but also — in particular through its main judicial authority, the International Court of Justice — to the peaceful solution of disputes between States in accordance with international law. The Slovak Republic has gained its first experience of ICJ proceedings. It welcomed the Court's Judgment in the case concerning the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project, which confirmed the validity of the treaty between Slovakia and Hungary concerning the construction and operation of the project on the Danube. The Slovak Republic is sincerely interested in the implementation of the Judgment, which would be based on an agreement with Hungary reached, if necessary, with the further help of the International Court of Justice.

An active and effective participation of Slovakia in the United Nations is one of our foreign policy priorities. To achieve this objective, Slovakia meets all its commitments under the United Nations Charter in full and is consistently intensifying its engagement in all areas of the United Nations system. The candidature of the Slovak Republic for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2000-2001 is the logical result of this approach. I should like to stress that my country, which belongs to the group of small and medium-sized States, is prepared to be fully responsible for bearing its fair share of the global responsibility connected with membership in the Security Council.

As we approach the third millennium, a considerable part of humankind is still facing poverty, violence, violations of human rights and the effects of war. The millions of people on this planet affected look to the international community, and the United Nations in particular, with great hope. Whether we will succeed in reforming the United Nations together into a strong, politically efficient and financially healthy system that will be able to meet the expectations of current and future generations depends on the will and commitment of all of us.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Mr. Jozias van Aartsen, on whom I now call.

Mr. van Aartsen (Netherlands) (*interpretation from French*): I speak to this Assembly with a sense of deference and humility. Deference, because I realize that I am speaking to the greatest multilateral organization of all time and from a rostrum where have stood almost all the great statesmen since the Second World War.

Humility because I was appointed just two months ago to the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs, and so I am a newcomer for most of the delegates. However, this is no way detracts from the pride that I feel regarding my country's long commitment to the United Nations system and the support that this Organization has enjoyed in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

I would also like to add that I feel reassured to realize that most of what I was going to say to the Assembly has already been said in the statement made by the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs on behalf of the European Union.

(spoke in English)

Article 23 of the United Nations Charter says that the General Assembly shall elect 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council. More to the point, the Article goes on to say that the Assembly, in doing so, must pay due regard

> "in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization".

Well, my country at present is up for election to the Security Council. In fact, elections are due to be held in this very Hall in a few weeks time. And so it seems only fair for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as a candidate for the Council, to explain where it stands: where it stands on some of the core issues now faced by the United Nations family, where its stands on the state of affairs in the Organization and where it stands on the Organization's future. In other words, what is the electorate looking at?

What the electorate is looking at is what I would describe as a nation responding. Throughout the Kingdom people hear the wants of the world, the needs of our neighbours and of people in peril. It is in keeping with the Dutch character to be penny-pinching but generous to those in distress, to be demanding but tough on ourselves as well, to hold strong views but carry a big heart — easily critical, prone to compassion.

In much the same manner we look at this Organization. We look at the Charter as a true monument of modern times. We feel a strong commitment to multilateralism, for reasons of principle and for reasons of necessity. We seek to promote the institutions of worldwide cooperation, with the United Nations at the core. Together, they span the entire range of human activity. We shall go on to give it the best we can offer in the form of ideas and in the form of resources.

I would like to demonstrate how seriously we take our Charter obligations by showing how, over the years, we have pursued the purposes of the United Nations, as spelled out by the Charter in Article 1. First, peace and security. It is perhaps the most thankless responsibility the United Nations carries. Indeed, the odds are overwhelming. Since 1945, the number of violent conflicts outstanding has risen from 4 to about 40. Their average length has grown from about two months to an

average of 14.5 months in 1995. Peace and security is where we have learned our lessons the hard way, and more mistakes are bound to be made. We, the Member States, need to shape up.

Meanwhile, the Dutch commitment to United Nations peacekeeping is borne out by our record. The Netherlands has taken part in 20 peacekeeping operations so far, is currently engaged in three of them and is getting ready to join a fourth one. Most recently, some 100 Dutch troops were stationed in Cyprus, where they are committed to keeping the two Cypriot communities at peace. All in all, some 1,650 Dutch troops are engaged in peacekeeping and multinational supervision. In fact, peacekeeping operations continue to form one of the principal tasks of our armed forces, and we remain ready to participate in up to four different peacekeeping efforts simultaneously at the level of a battalion.

Peacekeeping does not stand by itself. There should be a comprehensive response to the need for conflict management. We believe in a continuum between prevention, on the one hand, and reconstruction and development on the other hand. After all, many of the conflicts raging today take place in the developing world. Affluent societies cannot in good conscience walk away from a conflict once the smoke has cleared. Donor countries cannot turn their backs to the ravages of war and concentrate on the next CNN headlines. We believe that emergency aid and political initiatives should be teamed with longer-term development planning, reconstruction and reconciliation. We believe in building a bridge between conflict and development.

Another pillar of Dutch foreign policy is our strong desire to ban weapons of mass destruction. Our objective remains strengthening the non-proliferation regime, supporting real progress in negotiations on the reduction of nuclear weapons, and making existing conventions on other mega-weapons effective and more reliable.

Still, we are not talking only about mega-weapons. The transfer of small arms is a matter of concern for us as well. They are piling up fast, most of them illicit. In many countries they constitute a serious threat to the population and to national and regional security and even contribute to the destabilization of States.

Landmines are the plague of modern warfare, leaving a disgraceful legacy of the present century to the next one. Once in the ground, they keep. To this day people are maimed or killed in Ypres, Belgium, by landmines put in place during the first strategic use of them, over 80 years ago. Mine clearance and banning anti-personnel landmines have been pursued with renewed vigour in recent years, and with due reason.

I now turn to the second of the purposes of the United Nations: developing friendly relations among nations. Let me point to the manner and measure in which the Netherlands has contributed towards this.

By geographical necessity, the Netherlands has always been a seafaring nation, a nation of traders. Besides making us the eighth largest trading nation in the world, it has made us an outward-looking people, internationally oriented. Also, it has made us a multicultural society. Over 20 per cent of our population have their origins abroad — in Africa, in Asia, in the Arab world and in the Americas.

Over time, we have built up strong relations with countries of all regions. Two constituent parts of our Kingdom, that is to say the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, are located in the Americas. Our Caribbean Kingdom partners have important political and economic relations with their regional friends. They are engaged in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in the Organization of American States (OAS) and in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Rightfully, Africa is high on the Netherlands' political and development agendas. We encourage and support African countries in establishing peace, stability and democracy. We assist African nations in building up their mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. We help Africa in strengthening its place in the world economy — for instance, through the World Trade Organization. Dutch aid flows to all countries of Africa — last year over $600 million worth.

Turning now to Asia, the relations between the Netherlands and a large number of Asian countries go back to the sixteenth century. We are an original member of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Naturally, therefore, we have assisted Asian countries that have been hit by the financial crisis and its economic and social effects. We do so through multilateral channels and through joint European and Asian initiatives. Overcoming the crisis is important, too, for political stability in the region.

As regards Central and Eastern Europe, the Netherlands is heavily engaged in assisting countries of that region in their transition to market economy and democracy. Our involvement is a central feature in our relations with all candidates for accession to the European Union. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are at present the third most important donor, and we contribute to the Stabilization Force and to various organizations engaged in the region.

The Netherlands and the Arab world have long-standing economic and cultural ties. The University of Leyden has traditionally been a leading centre for the study of Islam and Arab culture. We have a growing Arab community in the Netherlands. We continue to give substantial support to the Palestinian people and are a major donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The third purpose of the United Nations, as spelt out in Article 1 of the Charter, is by far the most complex. Its binding element is the promotion of international cooperation, but cooperation in fields that, taken together, cover a wide range of human interaction. I would like to highlight some of them, without, of course, meaning to diminish any of the others. Notably, I will touch on development cooperation, human rights, and international law.

Poverty eradication has been the primary focus of Dutch development aid policy for over a quarter of a century. The Netherlands, whose aid programme last year ran close to $3 billion, has actively tried to strike a balance in its aid policy between the economy, the environment and the people. We are pursuing development that is sustainable — sustainable not purely in terms of ecology but in a wider sense: development that addresses basic human needs, that respects human rights, that builds human capacities, that is socially responsible and that does not mortgage the choices of future generations.

For many years, my country has been more than faithful to the international target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average hovers around 0.25 per cent. The Netherlands stands at a self-imposed 0.8 per cent. In percentage terms, it takes third place among the major donors. In absolute terms, in money spent, it has made us the sixth largest donor country worldwide for 1997.

All in all, $750 million from Dutch resources flowed to the United Nations system and to the Bretton Woods institutions in 1997. The new Netherlands Government is a strong believer in multilateral development cooperation. In its first major policy statement, it pledged that multilateral aid flows, including those to the United Nations system, are going to be expanded over the next several years.

As the Charter says explicitly, international cooperation applies also to promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We have made no secret of our attachment to the cause of human rights in the past; nor do we intend to hide it in the years to come. The Netherlands has been an active player in the Commission on Human Rights since at least 1980, has seen several of its countrymen serve in prominent human rights positions, has either drafted or supported countless resolutions and has strongly advocated standard-setting and monitoring. It is a topic that enjoys solid support in Dutch society and has constituted a clear political imperative for a quarter of a century. Member States can count on our toeing the line in the future.

Promoting respect for the rule of law at the international level has been recognized as part of our heritage ever since Hugo Grotius, in the early 1600s. In modern times, the Netherlands has sought to contribute to the advancement of international law. Areas where we have made contributions include human rights, legal cooperation, crime prevention, criminal justice and so forth. Much of the groundwork for the International Criminal Court was done under Dutch chairmanship.

If indeed we are to serve on the Security Council, what will be our aims in the next two years? Our aim is the primacy of international law. Our aim is building bridges. Our aim is addressing all issues before the Council. Our aim is more contact between non-members and the Council. And our aim is openness and transparency. In a nutshell, we will be driven by idealism, but guided by realism. It is in that spirit that we approach our membership in the Council and, indeed, the future of this Organization.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Theodoros Pangalos.

Mr. Pangalos (Greece): I wish first to extend to the President my warm congratulations on his assumption of

the conduct of the current session. Uruguay has indeed a major role to play in international developments, both at the regional and the international level.

I also wish to congratulate the current President's predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, for his performance during the fifty-second session. My congratulations and support are also addressed to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has deployed enormous efforts not only to keep United Nations services running, but also to further enhance their efficiency through the ongoing reform process. His political skills have been demonstrated in settling disputes which threaten international peace and security.

The Austrian Foreign Minister delivered a statement on behalf of the European Union to which my Government fully subscribes. I would like to elaborate further on some particular issues.

Greece consistently endeavours for peace and security — security in political and socio-economic terms, security through human dignity and through international law and order.

In that spirit, Greece welcomes the establishment by the Rome Conference of an International Criminal Court.

We hope that the Preparatory Committee, to convene in the wake of the Conference, will decisively tackle the remaining definition aspects of the crime of aggression.

Greece considers disarmament and non-proliferation to be guarantees of international peace. In the nuclear field, we welcome two significant developments: the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the decision reached in Geneva to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices.

My country shares the general concern about nuclear tests. We also concur with the general recommendations on the issue, namely, adherence to the comprehensive test ban and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as compliance with the international rules. Bacteriological and toxin weapons, known as the nuclear weapons of the poor, remain a threat to humanity. Reinforcement of the relevant Convention remains an urgent priority.

The Ottawa Treaty on anti-personnel landmines made history by totally banning their use. We urge those countries, particularly in the sensitive south-eastern European area, that have yet to accede to this Treaty to seriously consider the humanitarian aspect of this exercise and act accordingly.

Peacekeeping plays a major role in staving off crises. Greece has taken an active part in a wide range of United Nations operations, such as the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, and in the Western Sahara, in Georgia, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the United Nations humanitarian mission in Iraq and Operation ALBA in Albania. Greece also provides annually a significant financial contribution to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

The United Nations needs adequate resources and means in order to carry out its mandate. Greece has voluntarily accepted a higher percentage in the scale of assessments and pays its contributions to the Organization in full and on time.

Combating drugs is a high political priority for the Greek Government. Greece closely followed the proceedings of the General Assembly's special session on the international drug problem. Last June, my country's commitment in the fight against drugs was reflected in its chairing the regional Dublin Group formation for the Balkans and the near Middle East.

From its establishment, the modern Greek State has proclaimed that no discrimination based on colour, race or ethnic origin would be tolerated on its territory, while the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals who set foot on it would be fully protected. We have made a tradition of adhering to, implementing and supporting compliance with the human rights norms set by United Nations instruments and major conventions.

The President returned to the Chair.

The restructuring and new membership of the Security Council rightly elicit our attention. The enlargement of the Security Council should be based both on the criteria of the United Nations Charter and on the ongoing realities. We understand that major regional organizations, such as the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Arab League, the Organization of American States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Southern African Development Community, the South Pacific Forum and other important forums have a special responsibility in identifying those countries which, by evident commitment to principles enshrined in the

Charter, may further subscribe and contribute to its goals. On the other hand, 53 years after the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco, we have to acknowledge the new realities, such as the collapse of the bipolar system and the emergence of new stabilizing factors all over the world.

The future of this body of countries with limited membership, regardless of their geographical location or ideological orientation, calls for our consideration. We hope that a renewed effort of the Open-ended Working Group, under your guidance, Sir, will eventually reach a compromise solution.

Concerning the world economy, I share the view that globalization presents us with an array of opportunities and potential benefits. Nevertheless, it also entails increased risks. The international community has to make full use of the international financial institutions and instruments to weather crises and respond to the challenges of globalization. No effort should be spared to help developing countries, and in particular the least developed among them, to avoid marginalization through globalization.

Two very important aspects of the effort to better integrate developing countries into the world economy merit our consideration: first, the rapid and determined extension of debt relief, within the terms of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative; and secondly, improved market access so that developing countries can effectively benefit from the trade opportunities that the Uruguay Round offers. In this respect, financing for development assistance remains an additional element of paramount importance.

In the field of environment and sustainable development, Greece supports the work of the appropriate United Nations Commission. The significance of this forum invites me to recall a grave problem: the threat to the environment resulting from the expansion of nuclear-power production plants, particularly when they are located in areas subject to earthquakes, neighbouring sea traffic and inadequate infrastructure. In addition, we are deeply concerned by the increasing stockpiling of nuclear wastes and shipments of radioactive materials, threatening the lives and properties of developing countries' populations, in particular those of the vast South Pacific area.

Turning to my country's presence in regional organizations, may I recall the active role played by Greece in the Council of Europe through the Committee of Ministers, which it currently chairs. Among the issues on its agenda, I note the European Court of Human Rights, which will enhance the protection of human rights at the European level.

In the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Greece is involved in every effort aimed at promoting the notion of comprehensive security. With regard to activities in the human dimension, I simply mention my country's contribution in the field of elections observation.

Greece was happy to attend, as a guest, the twelfth Non-Aligned Movement summit held recently in Durban, South Africa. Its keynote was clearly the shape and scope that a movement born in a bipolar, confrontational world could claim in the coming millennium, ushered in by globalization. The message of the Durban declaration deserves our attention and consideration.

A year has elapsed since I expressed in this very forum the hope that Turkey would finally abandon its intransigent policies on Cyprus. It has proven to be a vain hope. This was a year of stagnation and frustration. Frustrated have been the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Adviser, Mr. Cordovez, to relaunch the intercommunal talks. Special envoys from several countries, including members of the Security Council, hoping to unblock the situation, came back frustrated from Ankara and the occupied part of Cyprus. Frustrated remain the hopes of the European Union to bring the Turkish Cypriot together with the Greek Cypriot in a prosperous State of Cyprus that is a member of the European family.

The reaction from Ankara, obediently echoed by the Turkish Cypriot leadership, has been one of harsh rejection, either in terms of a flat negation or by imposing conditions tantamount to cancelling what has been desired by the international community, prescribed by United Nations resolutions and even accepted by the Turkish Cypriot leadership itself.

Such an attitude of rejection is easily explained by the notorious designs of the Turkish Government to effect the partition of Cyprus. Mr. Ecevit, Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, has on several occasions said that the Cyprus question was resolved once and for all by his country's armed forces' invasion in 1974. Twenty-four years after the invasion, Cyprus remains a divided island and the Turkish occupation forces increase their presence and weaponry, even denying their victims the right to

effectively defend themselves. Twenty-four years is enough. It is time for the international community to strongly support the Secretary-General in fulfilling his mandate of bringing the two communities to the negotiating table to initiate a dialogue on gradual disarmament towards the complete demilitarization of the island.

Greece wishes to establish good-neighbourly relations with Turkey, based on the principles of international law and respect for international treaties.

The International Court of Justice at The Hague, whose compulsory jurisdiction has been accepted by Greece, is the appropriate legal forum for the settlement of problems in our relations. A positive response by Turkey to that effect would constitute a step towards the beginning of a new period of mutual understanding.

Greece pursues a policy promoting stability, good-neighbourly relations, cooperation and economic development in South-Eastern Europe. We participate in international projects or take our own initiatives, in the context of bilateral or multilateral schemes. We offer troops and counselling, funds and food. Greece offers to its neighbours and the region a much needed feeling of trust and security.

My country accords a high priority to our relations with Albania. We welcome the efforts of the Albanian Government to further pursue the process of normalization of democratic institutions and its close cooperation with the international community. Greece considers it its duty to stand by Albania in its efforts to overcome the serious difficulties it faces.

In the neighbouring Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and more particularly in the area of Kosovo, the situation has reached a critical point. The vicious circle of the use of force must be halted. The refugees and displaced persons must be allowed to return to their homes safely, without delay. Greece has sent humanitarian assistance to alleviate the plight of the refugees in northern Albania. We welcome the setting up of the Albanian negotiating group, and support the immediate start of negotiations with a view to arriving, as soon as possible, at a peaceful and negotiated solution on the future autonomy status of Kosovo, within the internationally recognized borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Terrorist acts and indiscriminate and disproportionate repression are unacceptable. Greece has actively participated, and will actively participate, in all international efforts aimed at securing a peaceful solution in Kosovo.

In Bosnia, Greece notes with satisfaction the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We maintain close relations with the Bosnian parties and offer substantial contributions to efforts aimed at ensuring the stability and development of this country. Greek soldiers participate in the Stabilization Force (SFOR) as well as in international observer missions. Important programmes undertaken by the Greek Government in the framework of the donors conference, held in 1997, are about to be completed.

In our relations with Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania, the promotion of mutually beneficial cooperation in all fields is of paramount importance.

In the multilateral field, Greece is committed to, and actively involved in, such regional schemes as the South-Eastern Europe cooperation process, the Royaumont Initiative, the South-East Europe Cooperative Initiative and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. We note with satisfaction that South-Eastern Europe leaders will meet again this year in Antalya, Turkey, thus consolidating the process we initiated last year in Crete.

In the Middle East, the present stagnation underlines the urgent need to reactivate the peace process. Its revival will bring hope for peace and prosperity. Once more, we stress the need for full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and agreements, and we urge the parties to make every effort to achieve real peace, which should be a just, lasting and global peace. Greece welcomes any endeavour likely to produce positive results, while supporting the initiatives undertaken by the European Union's special envoy in the Middle East. Successful meetings organized by the special envoy and the Greek Government bring together prominent Israelis and Palestinians in a conciliatory spirit. These meetings will, hopefully, be institutionalized as the "Athens Dialogue for Peace and Cooperation in the Middle East".

The Mediterranean remains our life companion. We have been the pioneers for the adoption of a European Union Mediterranean policy, accompanied by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) regulation, through which financial aid to the countries concerned is considerably increased.

The African continent is an emerging reality that will affect the future of humanity. However, progress in the fields of political pluralism and economic stabilization

has been coupled, over the course of the last year, with regression in the form of ruinous civil wars or border conflicts in a number of African countries. The international community should stand by the African nations and their organizations on the eve of the twenty-first century, advocating the need for good-neighbourly relations and, within the countries themselves, democratic rule, respect for human rights and an open market economy.

Greece shares the general concern about the developments in Asia. The financial turmoil is by no means settled. Indeed, it is still sending disturbing vibrations through the European and world economies. Asia can, however, overcome the crisis. Allowing external or internal tensions to drag on, with the prospect of escalation, obviously spells future disaster, in terms of chasing or scaring foreign investment out of the area and of funnelling precious funds to such dangerous and vain projects as the production of weapons of mass destruction.

Greece follows closely and contributes actively to the historical process of eastern European countries' reintegration into the European system. Our political credo and vision is that of a Europe without dividing lines and scars from the past. In this context, Greece supports the enlargement of the European Union with the 10 candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe, together with Cyprus, advocating the simultaneous launching of a global and inclusive accession process with all candidate countries.

Greece also extends its institutional links and promotes its historical, economic and cultural ties with the Russian Federation and the Ukraine and the other newly independent States in the Caucasus, Black Sea and Central Asia.

Our excellent relations with the United States and Canada are further enhanced through political and military cooperation in peacemaking initiatives and peacekeeping activities in South-Eastern Europe, as well as cooperation in preventing and eliminating terrorism. Furthermore, Greece, as a member of the European Union, stands for a broad transatlantic dialogue and the advancement of the New Trans-Atlantic Agenda.

Greece has traditional ties of friendship with the countries of Latin America, and, both bilaterally and as a member of the European Union, systematically supports ongoing, comprehensive dialogue and cooperation with them.

Until very recently Greece had been a recipient of development assistance, but for three years now we have been an important contributor, equal to the standards of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). We may not be such a wealthy country, but we are trying to grant effective and qualitative assistance to those interested in it and in need of it, using our experience to make this as beneficial as possible, supporting the struggle against poverty and famine and for economic and social development, and also trying to help promote human rights, democracy and institutions of civil society.

I would like also to refer briefly to an issue which is of particular concern to my country, the Olympic Games. Inspired by the Olympic Ideal, Greece presented on 4 February 1998 to the International Olympic Committee in Nagano, Japan, a comprehensive proposal outlining a set of organizational structures and a broad range of activities aimed at the practical realization of an Olympic Truce at the Athens Games of 2004 and at the strengthening of the role of the Olympic Movement. In order to support these important activities, Greece proposed the establishment of an international centre for the Olympic Truce, at the very site of ancient Olympia.

Further, Greece took the initiative and proposed the creation of a cultural Olympics for the first time in contemporary world. This would strengthen dialogue among different cultures the world over. This proposal was welcomed by the International Olympic Committee, and preparatory work has already started between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Olympic Committee and the Greek Government.

I would like to spare the delegates another pre-electoral speech. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands preceded me, I had to scale down my speech and become very modest, but I cannot avoid referring to the candidacy of Greece for the 1999-2000 term for one of the two non-permanent seats allocated to the Group of Western European and Other States on the Security Council.

My Government has legitimate and justified ambitions for requesting the support of United Nations member countries to such a distinction. Our long-standing foreign policy is dedicated to world peace and security, to the trend of decolonization and self-determination, to

assisting developing and less developed countries and to respect for international law and human rights.

We condemn terrorism in all its forms.

We are in favour of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all United Nations Member States and of the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Charter, including the democratic principle of fair and balanced representation of all Member States in the various organs and agencies of the United Nations.

I would like to draw the honourable delegates' attention to this last principle. In the Western European Group, a situation is occurring in which very few members — five of them — have by now served during 44 of the 52 years of this Organization's existence. Small and average-sized countries should also have a chance to be present on the Security Council, and I am proud to represent one of those average-sized countries, as I propose my country's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Excellency Mr. Abdellatif Filali.

Mr. Filali (Morocco) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, convinced as I am that under your leadership and with your vast experience and profound knowledge of international affairs the work of the session will be successful. I would also like to take this opportunity to salute your friendly country of Uruguay.

I would also like to express thanks to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for his successful conduct of the work of our previous session. I would like to extend, as well, our deep thanks to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, for the earnest determination and great competence he has brought to bear on the matters entrusted to him.

This fifty-third session of the General Assembly is being held as we bid farewell to the current century and prepare to usher in a new millennium. A large portion of humanity is still facing international conditions that do not come close to enabling them to achieve their ambition and their hope to live in a world where peace, international justice, economic development and life in dignity prevail.

Despite some signs of economic development in certain third world countries, the general trend points to an increasing gap between the advanced world and the developing world. The developing world is facing major changes over which it has no control, including a heavy debt burden, dwindling prices for raw materials, difficulty in gaining access to markets, financial speculation and low foreign investments.

This situation demands that our Organization not merely confine itself to preserving international peace and security in the classical sense, but go beyond that and seek to reduce the economic and social burden of developing countries. This would contribute to the emergence of a new world order based on consensus, consultation and partnership among all countries.

Since its independence, Morocco has firmly believed in the need to base its economic policy on the principle of free enterprise and external openness as a means of achieving the country's economic progress and social development.

Thus Morocco made an effective contribution to the multilateral trade negotiations that resulted in the founding of the World Trade Organization in Marrakech.

Morocco will also participate, with the same degree of resolution, in the forthcoming negotiations with other Member States to ensure that the international community achieves equitable distribution of the dividends of the international trade system, without overlooking the need for proper coordination of monetary, financial and trade policies, lest the financial crisis currently affecting certain international markets have adverse effects on the economies of other countries.

One of the world's primary political trouble spots, indeed one of the most complex problems threatening world peace and security, is the problem of the Middle East. The many resolutions of the United Nations aimed at finding a solution to this problem have failed to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable and legitimate rights or to compel Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem — Al-Quds — and the other occupied territories in the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. Those resolutions met only with Israeli rejection and defiance.

In this respect, the reneging by the current Israeli Government on the implementation of the agreements signed as part of the peace process following the Madrid

conference and the Oslo meetings dashed the hopes that had been pinned on those agreements and again plunged the region into a spiral of despair and instability.

Israel's reneging is quite obvious in its current procrastination tactics as well as its attempts to impose a policy of fait accompli through the building of further settlements in the occupied territories, in violation of all international norms and laws. Recently, Israel further compounded the situation by implementing, in a provocative way, a policy for the Judaization of Jerusalem — Al-Quds — by changing its cultural and demographic characteristics and surrounding it with settlement colonies. The latest such measure was the announcement by the Israeli Government last June of the expansion of the municipal boundaries of Al-Quds, as part of what is known as "Greater Jerusalem".

The entire Islamic world, as it denounces and condemns these practices, which affect the status of Al-Quds as an integral part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, considers all these Israeli practices as null and void. This was indeed confirmed by the meeting of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, under the chairmanship of His Majesty King Hassan II, in Casablanca at the end of July.

Morocco believes that this problem can be solved only through respect for the letter and spirit of the agreements signed and through the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially the relevant Security Council resolutions, in a way that will guarantee the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent state, with Al-Quds as its capital, and the return of the occupied Arab territories to their legitimate owners.

Despite the tremendous potential and enormous resources available in Africa, and despite the fact that most African countries carry out appropriate economic policies, the African continent is still suffering from serious political, economic and social crises which have led to the marginalization of our continent and the shrinkage of its role in the international arena.

Some of these crises are clearly reflected in worsening unemployment, increased debt burden, falling prices for commodities exported by African countries, inadequate foreign investment and declining foreign assistance, which stands at barely 0.22 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries, despite the fact that the amount agreed upon is 0.7 per cent.

It is indeed regrettable that the deterioration of the economic situation has contributed to a resurgence of political instability and military confrontations in certain African regions, as is the case at present in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and Western Africa.

While expressing concern about this situation, Morocco supports efforts aimed at containing these crises and at guaranteeing the countries of those regions, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo, their territorial integrity, stability and security. In this respect, Morocco commends the efforts made by the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to find a solution to the crises in Liberia and Sierra Leone. We hope that the efforts being made to overcome the crisis in Guinea-Bissau will soon be successful.

In order to find a solution to African economic problems and their political repercussions, we would like to reaffirm the proposal made by His Majesty King Hassan II during the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) meeting in Marrakesh for adopting an international plan similar to the Marshall Plan, with a view to ensuring African economic revival.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General of our Organization for the important report he prepared on Africa at the request of the Security Council. We hope that the international community will seek to give concrete substance to its recommendations through the settlement of conflicts and the strengthening of security and stability in our continent so as to contribute to the necessary conditions for its economic and social development.

Morocco has consistently affirmed that its membership in the Arab Maghreb Union is a free and strategic option which is irreversible, dictated by its historic and civilizational roots, as well as by its current and future interests. Given the existence of this membership, Morocco cannot but express its deep concern over the continuing suffering of the brotherly Libyan people as a result of the air embargo imposed on them, which caused them a great deal of hardship.

We welcome the approval by the United States and the United Kingdom of the Libyan proposal, which was supported by the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, to try the two Libyan suspects in a neutral country.

On the other hand, we deeply regret the suffering of another Arab people — the Iraqi people — as a result of the pernicious effects of the economic embargo imposed on that country. We hope that the agreement reached between the Iraqi Government and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, will lead to a resumption of cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations so that the embargo can be lifted and the hardships of this brotherly people can be ended. We also hope that the Secretary-General will succeed in finding a definitive solution to this protracted crisis.

As a Mediterranean State geographically located near European States, Morocco has been taking a special interest, as always, in efforts to consolidate Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. However, Morocco cannot but be concerned about the continuing status of the Moroccan cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the neighbouring islands, which are still under Spanish occupation, at a time when the page of colonialism in most parts of the world has been turned.

His Majesty King Hassan II proposed some time ago the setting up of a Moroccan-Spanish panel to consider and find a solution to this abnormal situation, in a way that would guarantee Morocco's sovereignty over its territory while taking into account the economic interests of Spain.

Although the Spanish authorities have not yet reacted to this fair proposal, Morocco remains convinced that the depth of its historical and economic ties with neighbouring Spain, coupled with the aspirations of the two peoples to achieve greater rapprochement, cooperation and participation in many fields, will be sufficient to enable the two countries to reach a formula for a definitive solution to this problem.

With regard to developments in the referendum process in our southern provinces — the area known as Western Sahara — we can only point out that it is still experiencing some difficulties. The identification process was stalled from the outset because the other party, without justification, refused to take part in the identification of a large number of candidates. Yet these candidates fulfilled the agreed criteria and had been registered by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. Once again we are now faced with the refusal of the other party to participate in the identification of these candidates, who this time presented themselves in accordance with the Houston agreements that the other party had, indeed, also accepted.

Those agreements confirmed the right of candidates to be identified and reasserted the validity of oral testimony. Indeed, in accordance with those agreements, the two parties had agreed to begin, as soon as possible, the identification of any individual who may present himself or herself for that purpose.

We can only express deep concern over these developments, which will delay the referendum operation which has been long awaited by Morocco and the Saharan refugee brothers who have been yearning for more than 20 years to return to their homeland, Morocco, in order to participate in their region's ongoing development. This will probably also have repercussions on the building of the greater Maghreb to which the peoples of the region aspire.

The relentless determination to exclude a number of Saharans from participation in the referendum casts still more doubts on the will of the other party to ensure the necessary conditions for the organization of a fair and transparent referendum.

We hope that the tremendous progress the world is currently witnessing will be a factor leading to the emergence of solidarity among all peoples, solidarity that will contribute to ensuring greater advancement towards development, security, peace and the spread of tranquillity and prosperity among all peoples of the world.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish:* I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Roberto Robaina González.

Mr. Robaina González (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: "To be or not to be."

Never before has Shakespeare's famous dilemma been so valid. Half the world is shuddering with the collapse of the stock exchanges, from Tokyo to Rio, from Moscow to Buenos Aires, from London to Johannesburg, and even right here in New York. We, the other half, are also shuddering, not because of stock exchanges and securities that we do not possess, but because the entire burden of the global financial crash falls mercilessly on us, and nobody, absolutely nobody, is safe.

The long-predicted Armageddon has arrived, and not just in a Hollywood movie. The huge global trap that our increasingly distressed planet has become does not

issue licences for survival to countries or businesses. It does not provide protection from acid rain or the impacts of El Niño, nor does it abide by or believe in ideologies and cultures. It does not offer life jackets to speculators or mega-owners.

As in the times of slavery, human beings have become mere commodities, engrossed in buying and selling each other instead of learning how to enjoy and defend their rights, while poisonous luxuries, the enemies of liberty, corrupt individuals and societies and deprive entire peoples of their national identity.

The inevitable globalization that we should have reached through fraternity, solidarity and cooperation has come upon us in such neoliberalized form that the liberal economic thinking that gave rise to it cannot even be recognized in this new dogma.

The process of globalization and neoliberal internationalization of the world economy has today multiplied the advantages for developed countries to the detriment of the increasingly underdeveloped economies. This makes them more vulnerable to external factors beyond their control, such as the excruciating burden of foreign debt, increasingly unequal rates of exchange, the widening technological gap and the persistent decline in the price of commodities, in the context of a ruthless, speculative and hopelessly inhuman market.

The inequitable trade relationship between rich and poor, more akin to theft or swindle than trade, is a basic element that explains this. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data only 0.2 per cent annual growth rate has been seen in non-fuel commodities between 1989 and 1998, while manufactured products grew at a rate of 0.9 per cent. How could economies whose terms of trade deteriorated, during that same period, at an annual rate of 0.4 per cent and whose currencies were severely devaluated be expected to grow?

The excruciating weight of foreign indebtedness — a phenomenon that has become eternal with the increase of inequitable trade — rose from $1.118 trillion in 1989 to $1.875 trillion in 1998, for an annual average increase of 6 per cent. What counts is money and finance, not development or human well-being.

Neoliberal globalization and some of its basic components, such as the liberalization of trade and free competition, do not in themselves mean that there will be an acceleration of economic growth or development in underdeveloped countries. At the same time, unrestrained deregulation and privatization have removed from the agenda the required protection for goods, services and workers in the third world.

Unfair equal treatment is being granted to economies that by their very nature, characteristics and volume are unequal. Tariff barriers are being replaced with more subtle and politically optional methods of protectionism, while a club of selected owners, transnational corporations and Governments negotiate, behind the backs of the vast majority, a multilateral investment agreement that gives the definitive seal of approval to subservience and exclusion.

There is no need for any special telescope to find the famous black holes that swallow stars in outer space. The worst black hole of them all can be found right here on Earth, right before our very eyes, where there was first a gap and then an abyss, where the wealth of the rich grew in step with the poverty of the poor.

International cooperation and official aid for development, funnelled through different organizations of the United Nations system, are tending to decrease, considerably affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the system's work in the field of development.

Even worse, we see attempts to further condition such aid to political demands that injure national States and undermine the sovereignty of countries and peoples. Furthermore, such attempts erode the authority of Governments by determining their development policies, which directly affects democratic governance. They also bring about the resurgence of diseases that we thought had been eradicated, generating high mortality rates and premature aging of the world population. These are so illegitimate that no one should support them.

We, the victims, cannot be expected think as our victimizers do. As Comrade Fidel Castro said only a few weeks ago at the twelfth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement,

> "it is not possible to acquiesce in a world order which embodies to the utmost the highest principles and purposes of a system that for centuries colonized, enslaved and plundered us all".

Because these nations are so disunited, we have not been able to elude the ravages of neoliberal globalization, which is so alien in spirit to the groundbreaking

Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and contrary to the very letter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in a few weeks will be 50 years old. Against all logic, it is in our meetings, committees and other forums that the prerogatives to which we are entitled as human beings are being reduced to mere caricatures in an insane race to alter the very foundations of international law.

We are constantly asked why we so stubbornly call for the genuine democratization of the United Nations and for far-reaching reform of its institutions. What does it take to understand that, when we are on the verge of bidding farewell to the second millennium, the world can no longer be forced to follow Bretton Woods norms, patterns and schemes that are consistent with a world order born out of a war and that are now obsolete.

The Dow Jones average sways and plummets just a few blocks away from this building. Uncertainty and hopelessness are rampant in the markets. Countries are going bankrupt -- and so are their Governments. Hundreds of millions die of famine, disease, violence, terror and war. Some even become living dead, as they are deprived of their national identity. But we are expected to accept that here in the General Assembly those who unleashed this madness are destroying the only truly democratic space where we can act together.

How much longer are we going to allow them to continue imposing conditions, unilaterally launching missiles, improving their nuclear arsenals and testing new "smart weapons", while they demand disarmament from the poor and the illiterate? And further, they are preventing us from doing away with the dictatorship of a Security Council which refuses to expand or to give up or modify the power of veto? There can be no talk of a Security Council that provides legitimacy, let alone security, so long as that body fails to abide by the powers conferred upon it in Article XXIV of the Charter; so long as it ignores the powers of other United Nations bodies; so long as its composition remains inequitable; so long as each and every member does not enjoy identical rights; so long as we in the third world, the overwhelming majority of the world's population, are not duly represented.

For Cuba, the one steadfast and sincere thing to do is to alert the world to which we belong, and to struggle for the values of freedom, justice, dignity and humanitarianism that we believe in and uphold. These are the values that should prevail for the sake of our endangered human species. It is for this end that the resources made available to the United Nations by its Member States should be used.

Enough of politicizing budgets under the pretext of alleged cost-effectiveness -- as if the millions of African children dying of curable diseases, the millions of illiterate people in Latin America, or the millions of people displaced by conflicts in Asia and the Middle East were bolts of cloth, raw materials or spent fuel.

Enough of the appalling facts cited in the latest Human Development Report, issued two weeks ago, which affirms that the barest consumption needs of over a billion people are not being met at all, and that more than 4 billion people lack essential health services and 2 billion suffer from anaemia, including 55 million in industrialized countries.

Enough of accepting that the indicators of human consumption in 70 countries have dropped below the levels of 25 years ago.

Enough of accepting that a child born in a developed country will consume and pollute in his or her lifetime as much as 50 children born in an underdeveloped country.

Enough of accepting that three individuals in this world have amassed fortunes equivalent to the total gross domestic product of 48 States.

Enough of accepting that the most powerful and wealthy nation on Earth, with the highest per capita income, should, according to the report, have the highest rates of human poverty.

Enough of demagogy. Let us make way for ethics, generosity and humanitarianism. Let the debts be paid and the current scale of assessments maintained. Let us put an end to special United Nations peacekeeping operations and to the arms market they have generated, and let us strengthen the actions of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the many other agencies that have truly endeavoured throughout their existence to assert the rights of every human being. That is the only really fair, responsible and humane thing to do.

In other words, let us not allow so many children to die in the next few hours, days, months and years — such as the 108,217 infants under five years of age, who have died of preventable causes in the underdeveloped world since we opened the fifty-third session last Monday, without the Assembly or the international community of nations being able to do anything about it.

Let us keep the voice and mandate of the peoples and Governments that make up the United Nations from being drowned out by the inhumane interests of the masters and their partners grouped in the "Washington consensus", which is how chaste, scholarly jargon currently defines the alliance of countries and international financial institutions that have dragged us all into disastrous unipolar neoliberalization ruled by a unique and criminal way of thinking which hypocritically boasts of being pluralistic.

Let us prevent heinous and disgusting phenomena such as terrorism from being fostered in that way; both the terrorism that constantly takes innocent lives — which many seek to compare with the fight of other peoples that have employed humanitarian and worthy methods in their resort to weapons in order to win their rights — and the other much more sophisticated, computerized and globalized terrorism that turns the economy, politics and ideas into a lethal weapon to secure the interests of a restricted circle of selfish people who believe it is their prerogative to unilaterally impose their laws and their punishments on others.

We recognize that drafting and implementing international treaties are instrumental in our struggle against terrorism. But if we are truly committed to achieving that goal, then the power to investigate, prevent and punish these acts must be assumed seriously by States as an obligation which may not be delegated. There must be genuine cooperation to apprehend perpetrators, and States must prevent by all means possible terrorist acts against other States being organized, encouraged, funded or tolerated within their territory.

Cuba, which has suffered from terrorism and to which nothing that is human is alien, cannot but unequivocally condemn such actions, methods and practices. Above all, we denounce those responsible for fomenting, supporting, funding, masterminding, propagating or tolerating these loathsome actions, which, as recent events have illustrated, turn their perpetrators into heinous Saturns, capable of devouring their own children.

For almost 40 years our homeland has had to defend itself from aggression and harassment of all kinds: dirty war, mercenary invasions, nuclear threat, veritable hunts organized in attempts to murder our main leaders, pirate attacks, constant acts of sabotage against our industry, our agriculture and our economy, blowing up of airliners in flight — as occurred in Barbados on 6 October 1976; over a thousand hours a week of subversive radio and television transmissions which illegally invade our radio-electronic space; and biological warfare. Our tourist facilities have endured terrorist attacks, employing Central American mercenaries, organized and financed from the United States, with the full awareness and tolerance of the authorities of that country. Furthermore, we are also currently facing further American criminal legislation aimed at intensifying the dirtiest and longest economic war ever perpetrated against any country. This is why we can speak about these issues with absolute morality.

I must say at least a few words about recent accusations by the United States of alleged Cuban espionage activities in Florida, which have been widely disseminated by the mass media as something extraordinary. I am sure the Assembly understands that the most ridiculous and laughable thing to occur in recent days in this nation of scandals is that the world's biggest spy, the United States, has accused of espionage the world's most spied upon country, Cuba.

The reality we live in is not recognized in the current Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nobody denies that this is a document of universal scope, the outcome of the most progressive thinking of its time and the international culmination of certain trends and values that emerged from the horrors of the Second World War. However, it should not be forgotten that when we embraced it in 1948 almost two thirds of humanity still lived under the colonial and neo-colonial yoke. All those countries had been reduced to mere objects of international law. For them, the most traumatic experience was not the war but underdevelopment, political exclusion and the new and even more catastrophic economic battles imposed upon them.

While we uphold the values of our 50-year-old Declaration, values which cannot be renounced, and reject attempts to cause confusion over it and give it an ideological and political nature, we must have the courage and awareness to recognize its historical and conceptual limitations, which illustrate that the time has come to draft a new international charter of human rights

capable of meeting the requirements of the new millennium.

If we do not do this now, what will be the use of all the efforts made five years ago at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights to adopt a Declaration and a Programme of Action? What will we tell our peoples? Is it not the duty of democratic Governments to be accountable to their voters for the discharge of their international obligations? Will we finally recognize the right to development as a fundamental, universal and inalienable human right? Will unrelenting reality persuade us that the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights requires the acknowledgment of national and regional characteristics and diverse historical, cultural and religious heritages, as well as the need to strengthen international cooperation concerning this issue objectively and without selectivity?

The establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner and other steps taken in this regard are just fig leaves that fail to conceal all the embarrassing parts.

Many goals have yet to be reached, such as the demand of the Vienna Conference that all States abstain from adopting unilateral measures contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations which hinder trade relations and impede the full realization of the rights set forth in the Universal Declaration and its international instruments, particularly the right of all people to living standards adequate for their health and well-being — including nourishment, health care, housing and basic social services.

What will we do to those who violate this mandate? Do we summon them to an international criminal tribunal? Under what charges: contempt for democratic decisions; State terrorism; war Crimes; genocide?

It would seem that the disturbing words of the writer and humanist John Milton are true:

> "They who have put out the people's eyes, reproach them of their blindness."

I say this because the United States Government has ignored all those complaints in the same way as it has drafted lists of presumed violators.

In a blatant challenge to the international community, the advocates of open markets and the end of ideologies have taken additional and distinctly extraterritorial actions aimed at reinforcing their blockade. I ask the interpreters to be accurate: I mean blockade and not embargo. It is an economic, trade and financial blockade against Cuba that ignores six consecutive calls by the Assembly to put an end to what has rightly been fairly described as the grossest, most serious and systematic violation of the human rights of a whole people.

On the contrary, those concerned insist on continuing their failed policy, one of whose instruments was exemplarily dismantled by the international community at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights, when it was decided to put an end to the extraordinary procedure on the so-called situation of Cuba and to get rid of the Special Rapporteur. That was a conscious and considered decision, the ultimate assertion of the growing rejection of a politicized resolution that should never have existed in the first place. It was recognition of the truth and a result of the weariness caused by calumny and lies. It was also the way out of a discriminatory, unwarranted and selective exercise targeted on Cuba that consecrated the imperial will to dictate a kind of international law where the powerful and wealthy judge and we, the poor, are doomed to sit on the defendants' bench.

Nevertheless, we have amassed enough evidence to indicate that a new vendetta is under way. The failed attempts last July in the Economic and Social Council to imposed a so-called joint statement on the presumed human rights situation in Cuba, and subsequent initiatives to engage high United Nations authorities or particular countries in the preposterous and unsuccessful task of the late Special Rapporteur, foreshadow new and unwarranted conflicts that will again divert the Organization from its main concerns.

I am referring to documents and guidelines such as these, which I could quote and which will be made available to the press, and which have been forwarded to almost all participants in this room by senior officials of a Government that, in keeping with its imperial philosophy, seems to think that they are entitled to speak but not required to listen humbly and respectfully. I quote from the document:

> "Multilateral efforts suffered a serious setback last April when the United Nations Commission on Human Rights voted against a resolution on Cuba by a margin of 19 to 16, with 18 abstentions."

"Maintaining international focus on the human rights situation in Cuba is a high priority for Secretary of State Albright. She has asked me to speak with you our interest in pursuing a joint statement on Cuba at ECOSOC."

"We feel that the most effective approach would be a joint statement of like-minded countries. The statement could call on the United Nations system to keep the human rights situation in Cuba under review. One mechanism for doing so could be the establishment in Havana of an office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights".

The general thrust is clear.

We take full responsibility in asserting that reconsidering the issue will only mean opening yet another, even more unacceptable chapter in the political manipulation of human rights mechanisms. This would be detrimental to the authority of the body or the relevant office, because our country would not accept the reimposition of any new procedure or discriminatory treatment.

Everything we do in Cuba, whether some like it or not, whether agreed or not, is done for the sake of the human being. We are proud of our reality and, as we have said before, we do not believe it is perfect. We do not want it to be perfect. We do not want to be bored with perfection. We do not take it as an endorsement or export it as a model, and above all we do not impose it on anyone, so no one will attempt to impose their reality on us.

We do not use our agreements or disagreements with others, including our differences with the very harsh, silenced reality of our accusers, to humiliate or condemn anyone. We prefer to discuss them by means of civilized dialogue, which we are at all times prepared to engage in, believing that what really matters is cooperation and not the imposition of a dubious convergence in positions.

Cuba is among the few Members of this Organization that has consistently submitted its reports systematically and in good time to the treaty bodies to which it belongs. Evidence abounds of the transparency and sincerity of our actions and of the strength with which we uphold impartiality and objectivity in the Committees on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

We have similar credentials in our systematic cooperation with the various mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights and with the Office of the High Commissioner, since its inception. Let me mention also our growing bilateral cooperation in this area with various States in an atmosphere of respect and on an equal footing, each one of us with our respective virtues and flaws.

For these reasons, while we denounce these new intentions and forewarn the Assembly against unwarranted, diversionist and fruitless exercises, we reiterate Cuba's unrestricted willingness and preparedness for dialogue and for multilateral and bilateral cooperation with all States.

No imposed solution can settle a problem. The international community should never allow a cause as noble and compelling as that of human rights to be held hostage to petty political interests.

Cuba is confident that dialogue will prevail over confrontation and recalls, as a token of its goodwill, the invitations it has extended to the thematic rapporteurs on violence against women, on children, on mercenary practices and on other matters, so they can become acquainted with the realities of a socialism that has never needed to proclaim its intrinsic humanity. Unfortunately, however, on occasions when it has broadly disseminated the required information with transparency, that information has at times been manipulated and used to serve the interests and objectives of our aggressors.

So long as Cuban children suffering from leukemia are denied access to Oncaspar and L-Spar to prolong their lives; so long as Cuban AIDS patients are denied access to AZT; so long as urgently needed purchases of respirators for newborn babies in intensive care units are hampered; so long as it is forbidden to sell to Cuba a single pound of metrotrexate to test important medicines against cancer; so long as a 33 per cent drop in the population's daily consumption of calories and a 39 per cent drop in the consumption of proteins is artificially and intentionally provoked by a ban on food exports, by excessive freight costs and prices, and by the harassment of suppliers; so long as attempts are made to starve us to death and to kill us with diseases, while speculation and manipulation is under way with feigned official aid presented as a humanitarian gesture, which we refuse

because we believe it to be insincere; as long as letters such as the one I am holding — I feel compelled to show them, and they will be made available to all — unilaterally justify confusing, contradictory and threatening understandings aimed at globalizing extraterritorial laws, it would be absolutely outrageous, immoral and even shameful to question Cuba's just and sovereign limits, legitimized by the 1948 Universal Declaration itself, that our Government and people are forced to place on those who, wielding human rights in the abstract, defame their homeland, disown their people, foster division and serve the interests of a foreign Power.

I quote from the letter from Mrs. Albright to Senator Jesse Helms:

> "The understanding is an important step forward in our ongoing efforts to encourage greater respect for property rights of United States citizens abroad.
>
> "We expect the full cooperation of the Europeans in carrying out the understanding.
>
> "It is important that we not miss this unique and historic opportunity to advance the goals of the Libertad Act and to establish broad new protections for the property rights of United States citizens in Cuba and throughout the world."

Certainly, this is worthy of note. What Mrs. Albright calls the Libertad Act in her letter is nothing but the regrettably notorious Act that has often been repudiated by the international community: the Helms-Burton Act. I am clarifying this because I know that for most of the members of this Assembly it would be difficult to equate a juridical instrument of this type with a lofty but often misused word such as "freedom".

A self-respecting nation does not allow its dignity and intelligence to be offended. A people that has fought and endured such a barbaric onslaught will never be brought to its knees. A people that exists today because it has learned to overcome its difficulties will never be shattered, let alone convinced of the urgency of any cause besides the revolt of the united.

We the poor are so many and our poverty so great that if we unite, the unity of our poverty will become our greatest asset. This will be our wealth, and we have more than enough poverty to become immensely rich.

Let us set aside our differences. Let us carry on our shoulders the salvation of humanity. Let us gather those who, resourceful and wealthy though they may be, can still feel in their hearts the urgent call for survival in the global era.

Let the world recognize our sincere vote as poor people, and if there is no other choice, let it hear our veto as well. Let us all unite in the struggle. As President Fidel Castro has said, Cuba will never tire of calling for this. Let us unite and globalize our opposition to every boastful act of hegemony.

Let us globalize respect for our human condition, which is the first and foremost right to be claimed. Let us globalize the efforts to save from ecological catastrophe a planet that has been ruined by neoliberalism and consumerism.

Let us globalize ethics, culture and the spirituality of peoples in their immense and wonderful diversity, so that each of us can drink from his own spring and we can pour our clearest waters into the great river of human thought.

Let us globalize, without excluding anyone, science, technology, development and cooperation between nations. Let the rich share their wealth. Let the poor grow, the illiterate learn to read and write, the sick heal. Let the healthy remain healthy and the hungry have food.

Let us globalize generosity and eradicate plundering, selfishness and greed.

Let us globalize respect for the rights of others as a guarantee of peace for all races, ethnicities and religions, so that we may bid farewell to arms.

Let us globalize human freedom as the most sacred trait of our species. Let this be a responsible freedom, with peace and independence, dignity and sovereignty, without humiliation or conditions, without alterations or renunciations — a freedom emerging from the rebellion of human beings against a world that no longer meets their needs and that they are determined to change, as set out in the preamble and article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We do not want these freedoms ever to be politicized; we want them to remain entirely human.

In a few days it will be 40 years since the dawn of Cuba's knowledge of that freedom that re-established the

rights of Cubans and enshrined our humanity, because that freedom was born in our own breasts and nourished by the blood, sweat, efforts and sacrifices of so many generations.

That freedom is still alive today, shielded by an all-enduring unity. It encourages our rebelliousness in the face of a world that deserves to be and can be changed for the sake of all mankind. As the book of *Ecclesiastes* commands:

> "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." *(The Holy Bible, Ecclesiastes 3:1)*

Now is the time and the exact hour that we must act.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: We listened this morning to the statement of the Israeli Prime Minister, and we shall present to you the Palestinian position in the statement of our President next Monday; however, we cannot but reply to what we have heard today with the following brief remarks.

The Prime Minister began his statement with a reference to the role of the League of Nations and the United Nations in the establishment of Israel. But, unfortunately, he never referred to Israel's rejection of the will of the United Nations, including the establishment of an Arab State in Palestine on equal footing, in accordance with the resolution that established Israel. He also failed to refer to the rejection by Israel of all United Nations resolutions adopted since then, its rejection of 24 resolutions on the occupied territories adopted by the Security Council since 1967 and its rejection of hundreds of General Assembly resolutions and the resolutions of other United Nations organs, let alone its violation of the principles of the Charter itself and of international law and international humanitarian law.

The Prime Minister said that peace for him is based upon two principles: security and reciprocity. We believe that there is a great deal of deception in such expressions and the way they are presented. The principle of security, for example, could serve as an excuse for Israel to keep the occupied territories instead of withdrawing from them.

What is more important is that he seems to forget the principles upon which the Middle East peace process has been founded, such as the principle of land for peace and implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), let alone the principles that are recognized by the whole world, such as justice and the right of peoples to self-determination.

The Prime Minister also stated that the Palestinians have jurisdiction over 100 per cent of the Palestinians in Gaza and 90 per cent in the West Bank. This is a preposterous claim. In addition to its falsity, it ignores the fact that 100 per cent of our Palestinian people on our land still live under the mercy of occupation and are subjected to Israeli oppression, in many cases not even be able to move from one village to another.

The Prime Minister spoke about the Palestinian statements without even looking at what is said by the Israeli officials, while he himself uses expressions such as Judea and Samaria to describe our occupied Palestinian territory — to describe the West Bank. He talked about the Palestinian covenant, ignoring the decision by the Palestinian National Council in April 1996 to abrogate the articles that contradict the exchange of letters of recognition, a decision which was met by the official welcome of the American Government, as well as the Israeli Government itself at that time.

The Prime Minister talked about Israel's transferring money to the Palestinians. He ignored the fact that it is our money and our right and that it is frequently subject to cuts, sometimes even withheld. He forgets that this procedure is the outcome of the Israeli rejection of the implementation of what has been agreed upon with regard to the construction of the airport and seaport. And he also ignores the continued destructive process that Israel carries out against the Palestinian economy.

He also spoke about the deadlines mentioned in the agreements, stating that these are not sacred. And he recalled unilateral acts by the Palestinian leadership. I would like to clarify here that the agreement on that transitional period expires on 4 May 1999 and that any decision taken by the Palestinian leadership, according to its responsibilities at the time, regardless of the nature of

such decisions, cannot be considered a unilateral act. I wish to add here that the primary responsibility for the inability of the parties to reach any final settlement within the agreed deadlines falls upon the Government of Mr. Netanyahu.

What the Prime Minister was really saying in the previous points mentioned, and in other statements, such as on his vision of the final settlement, is that he seeks to have the Palestinians live within isolated areas under limited self-rule, meaning in bantustans akin to the abhorrent apartheid style. He also says that he does not recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and that he does not want to implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967). This is not only a violation of the agreements reached, it is also a destruction of these agreements and of their essence, namely, the mutual recognition between the two parties. That is precisely the real cause of what ails the peace process at the present time.

Lastly, it seems that everything that has been said is based upon a certain understanding that the land is an Israeli land and that the Palestinians are a minority within Israel, in need of some kind of solution. Maybe even Israel is in need of some solution with regard to them.

Mr. Prime Minister, you are completely wrong. The land is ours. But we have accepted international legitimacy in this regard, despite the injustice that befell us. The Palestinians are an old, proud people who have the right to sovereignty in their own state. We will remain committed to the peace process, but on the basis of the mutual recognition of the legitimate rights of both parties and on the basis that the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) is the aim of the process.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of Iraq has asked for the floor. He has the floor.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to take the floor to exercise my right of reply against the Israeli Prime Minister.

This morning the General Assembly listened to a series of lies from a man who, by all international standards, despises all international considerations and who presides over a Government which does the same. The gross falsification of history in the Israeli Prime Minister's statement is a negation of the memory of the international community, which is perfectly aware that that man was educated and formed within the major terrorist gangs in the world.

The Israeli Prime Minister accused my country of having ceased cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), deliberately ignoring the fact that Iraq took this step after having implemented all its obligations under the terms of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) during the past eight years.

The Israeli Prime Minister is the last one to speak about the implementation of Security Council resolutions, considering the history of his country and the poor reputation it has acquired and the frivolity it has shown with respect to international resolutions. Specifically, Israel did not even implement paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) to which Mr. Netanyahu referred, calling for consideration of a Middle East free from all weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which is the Israeli arsenal, whether they be nuclear, chemical or biological.

The world knows that Israel has more than 200 nuclear weapon heads and a large arsenal of other weapons of mass destruction. It has even refused to join the system of international guarantees of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This is not to mention the refusal to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Moreover, Israel was the first to use prohibited weapons during its repeated acts of aggression against Arab countries — multiple-head bombs, napalm bombs — which were utilized on a grand scale against Lebanon, Palestine and other Arab countries. Israel also demonstrated its disregard of international law to an unparalleled degree when its forces attacked the United Nations centre in the city of Qana in Lebanon when it was full of innocent Lebanese civilians who had fled the hell of Israeli planes committing an act of aggression against Lebanon.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I will now give the floor to the representative of Turkey in exercise of his right of reply.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): The hour is late, Mr. President. It is with a sense of deep regret that I take the floor to exercise my right of reply to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. Pangalos. But the record must be set straight. Distortions must not be allowed to circulate freely.

It is evident that when it comes to Turkish-Greek relations, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece has a very selective memory. He chooses to ignore some very vital facts: his country's design to turn the Aegean Sea into a Greek lake is not mentioned. Their highly restricted acceptance of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice is ignored. But I have no intention of elaborating on this long list.

Let me once again remind this Assembly that only a few hours ago our Prime Minister, Mr. Yilmaz, from this very rostrum called for a dialogue between the two countries to resolve our outstanding problems. I sincerely urge the distinguished Minister to rise to this occasion.

Mr. President, amnesia may be a Greek word, but it cannot be a license for serious omissions.

As to the issue of Cyprus, the Foreign Minister of Greece mentions 1974 as if it were the beginning of the problem. He conveniently omits the tragic events of the 1960s, but there are those who have not forgotten. The Turkish Cypriot people remember vividly the ethnic cleansing inflicted upon them by the Greek Cypriots. They also remember being forcibly denied their constitutional rights.

As to the year 1974, let me quote the words of the late Archbishop Makarios when he addressed the Security Council on 19 July 1974.

> "The coup of the Greek junta is an invasion, and from its consequences the whole people of Cyprus suffers, both Greeks and Turks." (*S/PV.1780, p. 21*)

I have nothing to add to this statement. The state of the island at this moment is explained by these very words. Unfortunately, this mentality is still the main obstacle to achieving a reconciliation between the two co-owners of the island.

If Mr. Pangalos blames us for not allowing the tragedy of Bosnia or Rwanda to occur in Cyprus, he is absolutely right. To set the record straight, Turkey intervened in 1974 in exercise of its treaty rights as a guarantor Power. Turkey remains committed to protecting the Turkish Cypriot people from the fate of those who suffer tragically from ethnic and religious hatred and "cleansing" efforts.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In one of the statements made this morning, reference was made to the military capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate the position commonly shared by all States in the Middle East that the sole threat — the sole threat — to the security and stability of the Middle East stems from Israel's nuclear capabilities and access to advanced missile technology. This position does not reflect a mere critical notion; rather, it asserts deep and serious concern based on facts and realities. Israel's attempt to level allegations is but a futile cover for the danger it poses to the entire region.

It is also a matter of fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a victim of weapons of mass destruction and a principal proponent of the Middle East as a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. This position was well elaborated by President Khatami in this very building just three days ago when he said:

> "The establishment of zones free from weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East, constitutes an appropriate first step in alleviating tension and mistrust emanating from these weapons. We in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as victims of the use of weapons of mass destruction, are more cognizant than anyone else of their horrifying impact. We shall thus stay at the forefront of international efforts to establish and strengthen universal arrangements for their destruction." (*A/53/PV.8*)

Of course, Iran, like others in the region, cannot remain idle against the Israeli threat and menace to the region. Iran is determined to defend with all its capabilities its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity against outside threat and danger.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to address references to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla and to other parts of Spanish territory, made this afternoon to the General Assembly in the statement of the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Such references are not in keeping with reality, since they bear on integral parts of the territory of Spain whose citizens are represented in the Spanish Parliament and enjoy the very same status and privileges as their compatriots. Moreover, those references are not consonant with the good relations that prevail between the Kingdoms of Spain and Morocco.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.15

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Friday, 25 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Armenia, His Excellency Mr. Robert Kocharian, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kocharian (*interpretation from Russian*): May I begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your election as President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I am confident that the skills and vast experience you have acquired throughout your distinguished diplomatic career will provide the guidance we need to guarantee the successful outcome of the session. I must also recall the valuable contribution of your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, to the work of the last session of the General Assembly.

This year, 1998, has been a year of warning signals and signs of hope. We have witnessed both setbacks and strides forward in the quest for peace and international security. In particular, we have witnessed great progress towards the settlement of one of the longest and most intractable conflicts — that of Northern Ireland. The Irish peace agreement has proved to the world that it is never too late to find answers to seemingly impossible problems.

Unfortunately, wars, armed conflicts, acts of terrorism and other forms of violence have shaken the world during this last year and have had a negative impact on international stability and security.

A party to all international treaties in the sphere of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Armenia is deeply concerned about the possible consequences of nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan this year. We believe that as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) comes into force, it will contribute substantially to the strengthening of international security. Also, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, Armenia supports drafting agreements on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

The United Nations plays a great role in different aspects of international life, ranging from tackling global environmental problems to combating organized crime and illicit drug trafficking. In support of United Nations activities in these spheres, Armenia actively participated in the twentieth special session of the General Assembly.

98-85888 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We strongly believe that the illicit traffic in drugs and psychotropic substances seriously jeopardizes the economic prosperity and political stability of many countries and regions of the world.

Armenia also actively participated in activities leading to the establishment of the International Criminal Court, since we attach great importance to the battle against international crime, including the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Believing that the United Nations should play the leading role in the formation of an international anti-criminal strategy, Armenia supports the idea of holding, in Vienna, in the year 2000, the tenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders.

Armenia unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism as acts that have no justification on political, ideological, ethnic, religious or any other grounds. The recent terrorist attacks in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania once again show us the necessity for cooperation among all countries to combat that evil. We call for the accession of the maximum number of countries to universal conventions against terrorism, and support the Russian proposal on a United Nations convention for combating acts of nuclear terrorism. Armenia likewise supports including on the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly issues dealing with the declaration by the United Nations of a decade of international law, as well as events to be organized in 1999 devoted to the hundredth anniversary of the first International Peace Conference.

For the international community, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The semi-centennial anniversary of the Declaration enables the States Members of the United Nations to conduct a review of human rights conditions in their own countries and to identify ways further to develop the foundations of democracy and to promote human and national rights.

This year also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It is well known that the international community did not, at the time, duly condemn the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, and that failure encouraged certain regimes to commit new crimes of genocide. After the Holocaust, the United Nations addressed the problem of genocide, defining it as a crime against humanity, and adopted, on 9 December 1948, the aforementioned Convention. Despite that fact, over the past five decades, crimes of genocide have been committed in various parts of the world on more than one occasion. The recent recognition and condemnation by several parliaments of the genocide of Armenians committed early in this century is evidence of an increased understanding of the necessity to combat that evil.

The General Assembly, upon the submission of Armenia and five other Member States, included on the agenda of this session an item on the fiftieth anniversary of the genocide Convention. We hope that, by combining its efforts in the struggle against the crime of genocide, humanity will take a decisive step towards the elimination of that crime in the next century.

Equality and mutually beneficial cooperation among countries in the political and commercial-economic spheres, based on free market principles, should become an important factor for political stability in the third millennium. We have no other choice. Armenia adheres to this policy in all its dealings, from its approach to cooperation with international organizations to the process of becoming a member of the World Trade Organization.

We attach special significance to regional cooperation, be it in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organization or the TRASECA project. Armenia is sincerely open to such cooperation, although we have to state with regret that the blockade imposed on Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan is a serious obstacle to such cooperation. It is obvious that the region's vast potential cannot be fully exploited if attempts are made to isolate one of its constituents. Such attempts are doomed to failure.

Another factor of concern for political-military stability in the region is the gross violation by Azerbaijan of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. In three categories of ground equipment identified in the Treaty, our neighbour significantly surpasses the national limits set by the Treaty.

Despite the potential threat to our security, since the earliest days of our independence we have clearly and unambiguously forsworn the development of weapons of mass destruction and adhere to the principles of non-proliferation of such weapons and of control over the destabilizing accumulation of conventional arms.

The peaceful settlement of regional conflicts is one of the most important safeguards of stability and peace in

our region, the Transcaucasus. Armenia is committed to the ceasefire established in the Karabakh zone of conflict in May 1994 and will assist in its rigorous maintenance. We emphasize the contribution of the Minsk Group and of its individual member States, both to the maintenance of the ceasefire and to mediation.

Unfortunately, at present, the negotiation process is at an impasse. We believe that the main reasons for this impasse are the unclear definition of Nagorny Karabakh's status as a party to the negotiations; Azerbaijan's refusal to negotiate directly with the leaders of Nagorny Karabakh; and its insistence on preconditions regarding the future status of Nagorny Karabakh, which we believe must be negotiated. The international community must make every effort to overcome these obstacles.

In our opinion, given the intensity and specifics of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, its resolution demands unconventional approaches based on the principle of equal legal rights for the parties to the conflict, an end to the enclave status of Nagorny Karabakh and the provision of international security guarantees for its population. Armenia is ready to move forward and calls on Azerbaijan to resume negotiations without preconditions in order to reach a comprehensive settlement for the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

The challenges that the international community faces today are diverse and complicated. We are convinced that only a reformed United Nations can cope successfully and effectively with the increasing number of problems. This holds true especially for the reform of the Security Council, since the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world depends on a Security Council that functions effectively. We also call for deeper institutional reform of the United Nations, including in the administrative-budgetary sphere. We believe that the fulfilment by all Member States of their financial obligations under the United Nations Charter is indispensable if the Organization's acute financial crisis is to be overcome. Despite serious economic hardships, Armenia will fulfil its duties in this sphere. We need only recognize that a stronger and reformed United Nations serves our common interests.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Armenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clerides: I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of this body. I have no doubt that your diplomatic experience and proven leadership will guide us successfully in our work.

Allow me also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the determined leadership with which he steered the work of the fifty-second session.

The United Nations, being the primary vehicle for the pursuit of world peace, has striven throughout its existence to make the world a better place to live in. Despite adversities of all kinds, caused particularly by opposing national interests, violent conflicts, natural disasters and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the United Nations has pursued consistently the noble goals enshrined in its Charter, first and foremost the elimination of the scourge of war and the achievement of economic development.

To be realistic, however, the hopes of mankind for a new and genuinely just international legal and political order, generated by the demise of the bipolar world, are yet to be realized.

Cyprus reaffirms its commitment to work closely with the other members of the Organization for the attainment of our common goals. We support, therefore, the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi

Annan, to streamline the operations of the Organization in a way that assures its ability to pursue its goals, meet new challenges and safeguard its financial position. We stress once more the importance of restructuring the Security Council to make it more representative and transparent.

Cyprus welcomes the adoption of the Statute of a permanent International Criminal Court, empowering it to bring to justice the perpetrators of most serious crimes and violations of humanitarian law. In this respect, we consider the first-ever judgement by the international criminal court for Rwanda on the crime of genocide a very important step.

Of special concern is the rising number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Their plight calls not only for international cooperation in providing protection and humanitarian assistance, but also for addressing the root causes of displacement. We continue to believe that the best solution is the return of refugees to their homes in conditions of safety, with full protection of their human rights.

Cyprus condemns terrorism, which it considers a menace to humanity, requiring effective international action and solutions on the basis of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be characterized by lack of progress and obstacles to the implementation of the peace accords. The current stalemate poses a threat to the stability of the region. Cyprus, a neighbouring State with close relations to the parties involved, reiterates its support for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I would like to reiterate my country's support for the documents adopted at the General Assembly special session on the world drug problem and for the relevant efforts of the United Nations.

Cyprus welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Africa. His recommendations merit serious consideration and support by the international community. We believe that the international community should redouble its efforts towards assisting African countries, with special attention given to debt relief, so that they can avoid further instability and the danger of marginalization.

Cyprus joined in the worldwide rejoicing over the agreement of last April concerning Northern Ireland. It is important for the sides to honour their responsibilities and meet their commitments. We condemn acts of violence, which should not be allowed to block the road to peace, reconciliation and prosperity.

Cyprus supports strongly the efforts in the area of arms control and disarmament. Since my last appearance before this body, we have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention; we have also signed, and will soon ratify, the Convention on anti-personnel mines. I should emphasize in this respect that, in spite of the difficult situation we face because of the presence of an occupation army force of 36,000 troops, Cyprus has decided to sign the Convention as an expression of our determination to join the forces struggling to eliminate this utterly cruel method of war. We are grateful to Canada for promising to finance the undertaking to clear the minefields along the ceasefire line in our country.

The United Nations has a special role to play in the promotion of the well-being of small States. Small States are often exposed to a much greater degree than larger States to threats because of increased vulnerability of their environment and security.

In this connection, Cyprus has suffered for more than 24 years the grave consequences of the Turkish invasion and the continuing occupation of more than one third of its territory. Despite the pronounced will of the international community through numerous resolutions and the willingness of the Greek Cypriot side to negotiate in good faith, no solution of the Cyprus problem has resulted. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask why. The answer is: It is because of the non-implementation and flagrant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions by Turkey.

I feel that it is necessary to give some examples of these flagrant violations which prevented solution of the Cyprus problem. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and non-recognition of the Turkish Cypriot breakaway entity were violated by Turkey, which is the only State which recognized the Turkish Cypriot secessionist entity, and which sustains it financially and militarily.

As regards Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, calling for the speedy withdrawal of all foreign armed forces and personnel from the Republic of

Cyprus, not only have the Turkish armed forces and personnel not been withdrawn, but they have been increased and upgraded, to such an extent that the previous Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, described in his report to the Security Council the occupied area of Cyprus as one of the most militarized areas in the world.

United Nations resolutions for the return of the refugees to their homes under conditions of safety were not implemented, not only because Turkish forces prevented the refugees from returning, but also because Turkey, violating other provisions of United Nations resolutions calling on all parties concerned to avoid any action to change the demographic composition of the population of Cyprus, imported to Cyprus thousands of illegal settlers from Turkey, usurped the properties of the refugees and installed settlers in them. I could go on giving examples of gross violations of United Nations resolutions by Turkey, but in order to confine myself to the time limits allowed, I will refer only to the latest violation.

The recent demand of the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktaş, in the presence of the Turkish Foreign Minister, violates all United Nations resolutions, which call for a bizonal-bicommunal federation, with a single sovereignty, international personality and citizenship, and is aimed at derailing the negotiating process from the base of the United Nations resolutions on Cyprus, and also at extinguishing the independence of the Republic of Cyprus and creating, under the guise of a Turkish Cypriot Republic, a Turkish colony in Cyprus or, to say the least, a Turkish protectorate.

The non-implementation of United Nations resolutions on Cyprus tarnishes the image of the United Nations and its main bodies. The former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in one of his reports to the Security Council, identified as a cause of the absence of progress in Cyprus the lack of political will on the part of the Turkish side.

With that report the diagnosis of the causes of the failure to make progress towards a solution is completed. Is it too much for the people of Cyprus to ask what the next step will be? Will the United Nations finally take the necessary action to apply the required remedy in order to put an end to the tragedy that has befallen our small State and that has continued for 24 years?

The international community should not allow one State to violate for so long its expressed will. The Security Council, the main organ for international peace and security, should proceed to examine how to implement its resolutions as soon as possible.

I now want to address the problem of Cyprus, not by looking at the past, but by outlining my goals for the future. The Cyprus problem has been with us for over 40 years. Today, the two communities of Cyprus are led by the generation that was involved in the earliest stages of the Cyprus problem. This generation knows both the joys of friendships that crossed communal lines and the tragedies and suffering that also crossed communal lines.

Rauf Denktaş and I are both members of this generation, which has seen the best and the worst of the recent history of Cyprus. Our communities have entrusted us with their respective leaderships. The people of Cyprus, both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, look to us, their leaders, to help shape a future that is better than the present and that will not allow for a repetition of the past.

Let me offer my vision for the future. I want all Cypriots to have security in their homes and their communities; I want all Cypriots to pursue their livelihoods free of economic restrictions and the fear of instability; I want all Cypriot children to know their distinct cultural and religious heritage and to be able to carry their identity and political rights into the future without fear of domination from any quarter.

The solution to any constitutional problem on the basis of communal or ethnic criteria and federalism contains elements of partnership and political equality of the constituent parts.

The solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of a bicommunal-bizonal federation requires such a partnership of the two communities as would constitutionally provide for a maximum degree of internal self-administration for the two constituent cantons, provinces or States, and, adhering to the principle of the equal political status of the constituent parts, it must provide them with the same rights, powers and functions regarding their respective separate, internal self-administration. The constitution must also provide for effective participation of the constituent parts in the federal government. It must also secure all fundamental human rights and freedoms for all the citizens of the federation. Above all, it must safeguard the single sovereignty, the indivisibility and the unity of the bicommunal-bizonal federation. Such a federation,

becoming a member of the European Union, will thrive at home and abroad.

One of the questions we should ask when looking at various ideas for a solution is: Do they reasonably meet the needs of the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots, and will they promote stability and encourage cooperation and partnership among the people of Cyprus?

It is obvious that a bicommunal solution must be negotiated, not only because all United Nations resolutions so demand, but also because only in negotiations can we work out the practical steps needed to realize a functioning solution.

Security for both communities is a fundamental part of any settlement; this will require arrangements special to Cyprus. To be effective, an agreement to this end must produce a settlement that can meet the real life challenges inherent to a small island State.

I believe that the gap between what ordinary Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots want and need in a settlement is not so great as it might appear. Both want the same things: peace, prosperity, stability and physical, political, economic and cultural security, including respect for and enjoyment of their homes and properties.

I am confident that, working together under the umbrella of the United Nations and with the help of the international community, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can construct a settlement that meets these needs and removes the fears and insecurities that have plagued Cyprus since the middle part of this century. To do this, we must begin serious negotiations.

I believe that we, the current generation of leadership, must negotiate a settlement to our decades-old problem that will give all the people of Cyprus a future that will ensure that the bitter experiences of the past cannot and shall not be repeated. We, the older generation of both communities, must close this sad chapter of Cyprus's history with an agreement between us which will allow generations to come to build and realize the fruits of true partnership, based on mutual respect and political understanding.

While we cannot reconcile ourselves with the Turkish invasion and occupation, we are genuinely determined to renew and invigorate bicommunal confidence and trust, cooperation and interaction with our Turkish Cypriot compatriots. In my investiture speech last February, I extended a hand of friendship and urged the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktaş, to join me in working together towards finding a solution to the tragic problem of Cyprus for the benefit of all the citizens of the island. Similarly, I invited the Turkish Cypriots to participate as full members in the Cypriot delegation negotiating the accession of Cyprus to the European Union, thus shaping together our positions and common destiny.

Today, before the representatives of the international community and from the podium of this Assembly, adhering to the will of the international community for an agreed solution to the Cyprus problem within the parameters set forth in United Nations resolutions, as leader of the Greek Cypriot community, I renew my invitation to the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Rauf Denktaş, to work together for the solution of the Cyprus problem in order to build a happy and prosperous island for our children and future generations. The interests of Cyprus lie in the unity and interaction of the two communities. The continuing tension prevents Cyprus and its people from assuming their rightful role and making their contribution to regional stability and the improvement of Greco-Turkish relations.

The Government of Cyprus is committed to a peaceful solution, on the basis of the United Nations resolutions, which will safeguard the interests and the human rights of all its citizens.

We have consistently put forward proposals for the reduction of tension on the island.

Tension in Cyprus escalates because of the massive presence of the Turkish occupation forces in the north, their continuous strengthening and upgrading, and the corresponding need the Government of the Republic feels to strengthen its defences.

The Security Council, recognizing that the increase in tension is due to the build-up of military forces, has called in a number of its resolutions for the reduction of forces and armaments.

While the Government of the Republic of Cyprus will continue to exercise its sovereign right to strengthen its defences with whatever means it considers necessary for as long as Turkish occupation forces remain in Cyprus, I have not failed, in response to Security Council resolutions, to suggest concrete ways and measures to work for a specific programme of reduction of foreign and local forces and equipment as a necessary

preparatory step for the programmed and final withdrawal of all foreign forces and other elements and for the demilitarization of Cyprus. These proposals and suggestions, on our part, are still valid and timely, and as such they remain on the negotiating table. We remain committed to a solution to the problem by peaceful means, and for this a lessening of tension is a necessary ingredient.

In the face of continuous threats against Cyprus by the vastly superior military might of Turkey, whose ultimate aim is to keep the island a perpetual hostage, to destroy its sovereignty and to reduce it to a Turkish protectorate, the strong, principled support of United Nations Members is of paramount importance.

At this point, I wish to thank the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General for discussing the Cyprus problem on 24 September 1998 and for issuing a statement calling for an early resumption of a sustained process of direct negotiations between the two communities, reminding them at the same time of the need to achieve a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with Security Council resolutions and to avoid any actions which might increase tension.

I reply "Yes" to the resumption of a sustained process of direct negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions; I reply "Yes" to avoiding any action that might increase tension and thus jeopardize progress in the negotiating process.

We trust that we can rely once again on the active solidarity of Members at this crucial juncture, as the most sacred principles of the United Nations Charter and the credibility of the world public order itself come into focus in this respect.

As we approach the new millennium, the leaders of the world must decide what kind of world we want our children and grandchildren to live in. Is it a world of sheer interests and lack of principles, where cold calculations of economic and strategic interests are pre-eminent, or a world governed by justice and respect for human rights, which is the only solution for permanent peace and stability in the world?

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, His Excellency the Right Honourable Donald Charles McKinnon, on whom I now call.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): May I start, Sir, by congratulating Mr. Opertti on his election as President of this great Assembly, and wishing him well as he guides its deliberations. I was privileged to visit his country, Uruguay, earlier this year, and appreciated the warmth and hospitality on that occasion.

I would also like to express our thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, who, with considerable commitment, presided over the introduction of many important reform measures during the past session.

Each year this debate provides an opportunity to take a longer perspective on the United Nations — to look back and, of course, to look ahead. We have achievements to acknowledge and challenges for the future to consider. In doing so, our view is informed by present-day conditions. We are living in very difficult times. The economic events that have unfolded over the last year, initially in Asia, now show signs of having a global impact. They will affect developed and developing countries alike across most regions of the world. The problems that face us demand a calm and steady response if financial troubles are not to spill over into wider instability. This presents a direct challenge to us all, and a test of the component parts of the multilateral system.

This year we mark 50-year milestones in two major areas of United Nations work, two areas that distinguish this half-century from earlier times: international peacekeeping and the development of international human rights law. Both have a part to play in responding to the challenges of the present day. Both typify the unique

contribution of the United Nations system. It is in this global setting that universal international norms can be established. The international rule of law gives us a framework with which to deal confidently with the problems that confront us. And it is through collective security that the countries of the world can work together to promote and reinforce peace and stability.

New Zealand, as a small country, has from the outset valued the opportunities for global debate and collective action provided by the United Nations. We are committed to the strengthening of that system. We believe its effective operation is essential to the well-being of our world.

We are, of course, as many are, conscious of the criticisms that have been levelled at the United Nations in recent years. Ten years ago the United Nations stock was very high. The end of the cold war was seen as heralding a new age. In 1988 the United Nations peacekeeping forces were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At the turn of the decade there was talk of a new world order.

But the world community's expectations of what could be achieved sometimes exceeded Member States' own political will to deliver. And the United Nations machinery, which had grown and expanded to meet world expectations, proved too cumbersome — and often very costly — to respond effectively.

Euphoria about the United Nations began to give way to cynicism. One editorial writer this year referred to the United Nations as "a busted flush". But when we take a longer view it is clear that neither euphoria nor cynicism is the appropriate reaction.

Since the end of the cold war the United Nations peacekeeping machinery has been used as never before. There have been some marked successes and, regrettably, some failures. Much has been learned. Future peacekeeping mandates must reflect the lessons learned.

The need for the United Nations to be able to carry out its peacekeeping role remains. Its successes point to what it can achieve. But today fewer troops are wearing the blue beret, and troop-contributing countries do not receive timely reimbursement.

The largest contributor's arrears in peacekeeping and the regular budget cast a long shadow over the Organization. Dues outstanding at present have reached alarming proportions. This affects all — large nations and small nations.

We cannot afford to have the capacity of the United Nations restricted by this constant budget uncertainty.

In my own area of the South Pacific we developed a regional response to a regional problem. I am referring to the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, an island which was ravaged by civil war for nine years but has enjoyed peace for the last 12 months. It was the Governments of the region that set out to help the Government of Papua New Guinea and representatives of the Bougainville people to bring this horror to an end. The contributions of Australia, Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and my own country have played a valuable and significant role, and there is now growing hope and confidence on Bougainville — rare commodities for almost a decade. The Lincoln Agreement, signed in Christchurch, New Zealand, in January, while formalizing the ceasefire, paved the way also for United Nations participation. We welcomed the United Nations decision to set up a small political office on the island. This commitment by the United Nations will help strengthen the peace process there.

Today the world faces uncertainty caused by the financial turmoil which began in Asia. It is affecting the Russian Federation, is putting many countries in Latin America under pressure and is now touching just about everybody. The sudden plunge in investor confidence and the reversal of developing markets' short capital flows has dramatically changed economic and social prospects. World economic growth this year will be significantly reduced.

This most serious economic situation in many years has the potential to intrude upon all of our lives. We must cooperate to turn this crisis around. And at the national level we must take the actions required, not just for our own sakes but in the interests of the broader international community. This includes refraining from protectionist reactions, which could only exacerbate it, and pushing ahead with liberalization of markets wherever possible.

A serious challenge is to ensure that economic insecurity does not threaten political and social stability. We must resist pressures to take political actions that we would normally avoid. The best way to achieve this is through a collective approach to the problems that confront us; to strengthen our multilateral institutions in the United Nations system and elsewhere and build confidence in our joint ability to work through difficult times.

I was particularly struck by the comments of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on these matters in his statement on Monday. His characterization of the crisis — that it is not just financial or economic or social or political, but all of these things at once — is exactly right. I thoroughly endorse the Secretary-General's conclusion that we must address the crisis on all these fronts.

As a forum for debate, and as a body capable of taking global action, the United Nations, together with its specialized agencies, has an important role to play in building capacity and providing social support where it is needed. Much of what the United Nations has achieved provides the norms and mechanisms to help us through difficult times of the sort we are facing right now. The challenge for the Organization is to act decisively to tackle the problems that have the potential to undermine our security, problems that have their greatest impact on ordinary people in developing countries. Now is not the time to go backwards.

Recent tragic events in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam have underlined that the fight against terrorism is far from over. The response to terrorism must be decisive and unequivocal. The international community has a duty to ensure that there are no safe havens for terrorist groups. Universal commitment to the network of anti-terrorist instruments must be a fundamental objective of all Members of this Organization.

War crimes and crimes against humanity have seen a resurgence in this last part of the twentieth century. New Zealand supports the work of the ad hoc war crimes Tribunals in bringing criminals to justice. But this is not enough. New Zealand has long called for an international criminal court that would have jurisdiction over such crimes. We commend the effort of those who, through much hard work, dedication and compromise, enabled the Statute for the International Criminal Court to be adopted. It is our expectation that, with the support of the international community, the Court will prove an effective tool in the fight against those who carry out appalling atrocities.

Nowhere is the need for multilateral action more clearly obvious than in our efforts to halt environmental degradation and promote sustainable development.

New Zealand is honoured to have our own Environment Minister, the Honourable Simon Upton, chair the Commission on Sustainable Development for its seventh session. It is our strong hope that this session will see us advance Agenda 21, and take further steps towards achieving the goals set at the Rio Earth Summit six years ago. It is appropriate that in the United Nations Year of the Ocean the session's themes will include oceans and seas and the review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in preparation for next year's special session of the General Assembly.

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted last December was a positive first step in dealing with this quintessentially global problem. There remain some important implementation issues to be resolved. The Fourth Congress of the parties in Buenos Aires will provide an opportunity to make further progress.

Thanks to the commitment of the Secretary-General, we now have an Organization that is efficient and effective. There is more to be done if this great Organization is to meet the challenges of the present day: changes that make it possible to redirect efforts from the administration of the Organization to its front-line work in development and confronting global problems.

New Zealand looks forward to continuing the dialogue on financing for development. Through our current membership of the Economic and Social Council we have followed closely the evolving debate on this very important issue. We very much welcome the initiatives taken by the Organization towards closer linkages with the Bretton Woods Institutions. Those institutions are themselves at the forefront of the effort to tackle the present economic crisis, probably the greatest challenge they have ever had. However, we must decide whether in their present form they are appropriate for the twenty-first century.

This Organization, too, like any other, needs to respond to changing circumstances, and be flexible enough to meet new challenges. It must reflect the world of today, not stay fixed in the patterns of earlier times. The East-West conflict is well behind us. We now need to address anew the divide between North and South. The United Nations development role is crucial. Once again I believe the Secretary-General hit the nail on the head when he described in his statement on Monday the need to restore development to its proper place in global economic strategy. Also essential are measures to free up trade and investment flows, and promote access to information and technology. All of these are tools with

which to fight the economic downturn which is confronting us.

The United Nations clearly has the leading role to play in development. Other international institutions play a complementary part. I am personally conscious of the particular contribution made by the Commonwealth through the recent Commonwealth Small States Mission. That Mission highlighted the special vulnerability of small States, which has led to the establishment of the Commonwealth/World Bank task force on the issue which will have relevance to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the question of vulnerability.

Within the United Nations we need to correct the North-South imbalance to which I referred through reform of the Security Council. More equitable representation on the Council would better reflect the world as it is and today's United Nations. Expansion is proving a complex issue, but there has been some good progress this year in the equally important area of reforming the Council's working methods. Altogether, these are matters which require careful consideration and negotiation. Setting artificial deadlines ahead of general agreement on a reform package would not be helpful and could in fact prove damaging to the Organization. Any reforms must enjoy the support of the greatest possible number of Member States.

I should add that regional groups in the United Nations still reflect an earlier era. New Zealand is certainly open to new ideas on how groupings can be reorganized to create a more equitable distribution of electoral opportunities and to recognize modern-day political and economic linkages.

In the field of disarmament and arms control, it is timely to consider how far we have come and what we have achieved. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996 certainly promised the end of nuclear testing. But the global non-proliferation norm was shattered by the nuclear testing in South Asia, raising grave fears of a potential arms race. New Zealand has taken some encouragement from statements made in this Hall in recent days, and hopes that 1999 will be the year in which all countries that have not yet done so will sign up unconditionally to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The Conference on Disarmament has now agreed to proceed with negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. New Zealand wants to see those negotiations concluded as soon as possible. There must be no stepping back from the objective of complete disarmament, including the elimination of nuclear weapons. New Zealand's commitment to this objective was reiterated in the declaration which I, together with the Foreign Ministers of seven other countries, issued on 9 June. New Zealand is now working with those countries on a draft resolution based on the concerns outlined in the declaration.

One achievement which I personally see as a top priority for 1999 is the conclusion of a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Following a very successful initiative from Australia, I was pleased to chair a group of ministers who this week issued a statement urging Governments to commit themselves to completing this task.

New Zealand supports the actions of the United Nations to ensure the elimination of Iraq's stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and the threat they pose to the security of the region. We urge the Government of Iraq to resume cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission so that the elimination of these dreadful weapons can be confirmed. Then the Security Council can once more address the question of lifting sanctions.

In the 50 years since Member States adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the significance of the Declaration has been demonstrated time and time again. Yet there remains much to be done before the vision in the Charter and in the Declaration can be realized for all. We are confident that, under the leadership of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we will continue to make good progress towards the realization of that vision.

The United Nations can add value in promoting and protecting fundamental human rights standards, emphasizing practical capacity-building efforts. We have been supporting the High Commissioner's efforts in this area, and we will continue to do so.

We see countries in all regions of the world seeking the international community's support as they build structures to provide good governance and deliver hope and greater well-being to their people. In particular, I am

encouraged by developments in Nigeria and in Sierra Leone in this regard.

As the last 50 years have demonstrated, this Organization has added a whole new dimension to cooperation among nations. No lesser body could have achieved so much. In the longer perspective of history it will be the dramatic development of the international rule of law and the evolution of collective approaches to security, both political and economic, which will characterize our era. In other words, that really is the work of the United Nations.

Now, with the challenge of the economic problems that face us, we nations of the world are more dependent than ever on solving our shared problems together. New Zealand therefore rededicates itself to the United Nations and to the ideals that this Organization stands for.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Hong Soon-young.

Mr. Hong (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I sincerely congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. We are fully confident that the Assembly will reap fruitful results under his distinguished leadership. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, and to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

I would like to discuss today our common future and the various efforts that we will need to consider to ensure its betterment. With the new millennium just around the corner, we must contemplate the possibilities for our future world. With confidence and pride, we can look back over the past five decades and note with appreciation the tremendous contributions the United Nations has made towards international peace and prosperity. We must also note that today the United Nations is confronted with enormous challenges and opportunities. The identification of these challenges, both within the United Nations itself and in the world with which the United Nations must engage, is where our discussion must begin.

As a world community, we face trends and challenges that test our wisdom and courage. Before I discuss our common efforts, I would like to begin by addressing how we are now handling our own concerns in Korea. Last February, the Republic of Korea inaugurated the Government of President Kim Dae-jung. This Government carries special significance for the Korean people because it marks the first time an opposition party has acceded to power in the 50-year constitutional history of Korea.

The Republic of Korea is one of the countries that gained independence during the last half-century; it has subsequently developed into a liberal democracy within a relatively short period of time. Poverty-stricken and war-torn only 50 years ago, the Republic of Korea has now grown to be a middle-power State.

My country is currently endeavouring to overcome enormous economic difficulties and to ensure the parallel and harmonious development of democracy and free market economy. We are well aware that the world is watching to see if and how we can accomplish such a difficult task. On 15 August 1998, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Government of the Republic of Korea, President Kim Dae Jung proclaimed the launching of our "Second Nation Building" to define the nation's efforts to overcome the current crisis and to foster Korea's democracy and market economy to greater maturity.

Our immediate concerns, however, are not only economic. The new Government of the Republic of Korea formulated the "Sunshine Policy", a policy of constructive engagement, as the cornerstone of its stance towards North Korea. Division, war and confrontation have more often than not characterized inter-Korean relations. Changing the nature of this relationship requires the restoration and cultivation of mutual trust between the two parties. To achieve these goals, President Kim announced the following three principles immediately after his inauguration: no tolerance of any military provocation by North Korea; no attempts on our part to absorb the North; and the active promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation, exchange and cooperation.

In line with these principles, my Government is encouraging private sector initiatives to pursue exchanges and cooperation with the North at their own discretion, while maintaining the principle of reciprocity at the governmental level. The Republic of Korea will remain committed to actively responding to the appeals of the United Nations and other international organizations to assist North Korea to overcome its food shortages and economic difficulties. We believe that inter-Korean consultations are indispensable for North Korea's economic recovery. In this regard, we also look forward

to the role of the United Nations system as a facilitator of this process.

In his August speech, President Kim Dae Jung further proposed the establishment of a permanent inter-Korean dialogue arrangement headed by ministerial or vice-ministerial officials, in the hope of opening a new era of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas. He also made it clear that the Republic of Korea is willing to send an envoy to Pyongyang to discuss this proposal. The main thrust of President Kim's engagement policy is to establish a workable system of peaceful coexistence based on reconciliation and mutual trust.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea reacted passively or even negatively to these proposals. It provoked the Republic of Korea by infiltrating a submarine into South Korean territorial waters in June, and again in late August by launching a rocket into the western Pacific Ocean without any prior warning. My Government deplores these acts of provocation. They pose a serious threat to our security. But despite these acts of provocation, my Government continues to uphold the keynote of its engagement policy so that the two Koreas might come to enjoy the benefits of peaceful coexistence.

My Government hopes that the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will put aside its defiance and respond positively to our calls for dialogue and collaboration. We would like to revitalize and implement the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement of 1992 through South-North dialogue. My Government will try to ease tension and create a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula through the four-party talks process. I wish to reiterate that our immediate objective is, first and foremost, peaceful coexistence. We hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will respond with an equal display of sincerity and good faith to our policies of accommodation.

I would now like to share some thoughts with you on the current global economic situation. In the past decade, we have witnessed deepening interdependence among countries in the accelerated, market-driven process of globalization. However, contrary to earlier expectations that the globalization process would stimulate world economic growth and reduce the gap between developed and developing countries, the international community is now baffled by the negative repercussions of rapid globalization. Asian countries, which have long been a model of economic development, are now struggling with serious financial crises. Other countries are also suffering economic unrest, and together these may lead to global economic turmoil.

The international community, amid sudden and unexpected economic turbulences, would be well advised to develop a common strategy to maximize potential economic benefits of market liberalization and globalization. Towards this end, my Government welcomes the United Nations initiative to strengthen its dialogue and cooperation with the Bretton Woods system. The United Nations is expected to play a more active role in addressing diverse problems arising from the globalization process.

Among the various factors that triggered our own domestic economic difficulties was a loose application of the rule of accountability in the corporate and financial sector. My Government is trying to turn the current financial crisis into an opportunity to reform and revitalize its economy. We are taking bold and decisive steps towards a comprehensive structural reform based on democracy and market principles. This structural reform is intended to ensure deregulation of economic activities, transparency and accountability in the financial and corporate sector, and mobility in the labour market. When the ongoing structural reform is successfully completed, the Republic of Korea will be a more free and more open society, contributing to the resurgence of economic dynamism in the Asian region. This is the goal of our structural reform.

In spite of overall growth in the world economy, the least developed countries continue to be marginalized and still do not receive their fair share of the benefits of that general trend. As a community, we should pay more attention to the deteriorating situation in these marginalized countries and should strengthen economic and development cooperation for their sustainable growth. For this purpose, my Government supports the development of the least developed countries through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and cooperates with United Nations regional economic commissions, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Even with the current financial crisis, the Republic of Korea continues to play its due role in development cooperation, with KOICA as its focal point.

While contributing to the strengthening of multilateral cooperation, we are also participating in regional cooperation efforts aimed at stimulating and

sustaining steady regional growth and balanced development for the Asia-Pacific region. We are contributing to regional liberalization of trade and investment through active involvement in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC). In addition, my Government is scheduled to host the third summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting in the year 2000. We will do our best to make the summit a milestone in building a comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe.

Beyond these immediate concerns for economic revitalization in Korea and the world community in general, we are faced with another long-term challenge, that of environmental protection. Climate changes, for instance, demand urgent attention and concrete actions by all countries. Last year, we made historic progress in combating global warming by adopting the Kyoto Protocol. I am pleased to say that my Government will accede to the Kyoto Protocol this afternoon.

I should like to take this opportunity to say a few words about the International Vaccine Institute (IVI). My Government has hosted IVI as a part of its commitment to international efforts to prevent childhood diseases, especially those in developing countries. Thirty-two Governments and the World Health Organization (WHO) have signed the Establishment Agreement of IVI, aimed at developing and distributing non-commercial vaccines. Yesterday in New York, the Government of the Republic of Korea and IVI signed the Headquarters Agreement. I look forward to more active support and to the substantial participation of Member States in this worthy project.

Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and despite strenuous efforts by the United Nations and human rights defenders, we are still witnessing, to our dismay, serious human rights violations and blatant challenges to United Nations human rights mechanisms throughout the world. Notwithstanding these grim realities, I am convinced that history is moving towards universal respect for human rights and dignity. In this context, my Government fully supports the Secretary-General's initiative to mainstream human rights in all of the United Nations activities and programmes. As an initiative to bolster national human rights safeguard mechanisms, my Government has begun preparations for enacting a comprehensive human rights act and establishing a national human rights institution.

My Government welcomes the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in Rome last July. We are confident that the establishment of the Court will be a landmark in strengthening the international legal system. We earnestly hope that the Court will be launched as soon as possible.

In the rapidly changing international security environment of the post-cold-war era, the United Nations is now faced with new challenges arising from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We deeply regret the recent nuclear tests carried out by India and then Pakistan. These tests seriously undermine the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon the States concerned to desist from further nuclear testing and weaponization, and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. We also urge the international community to maintain vigilance to prevent the transfer of their nuclear weapons-related materials, equipment and technology to third countries.

In this context, we believe that the early entry into force and the securing of the universality of the CTBT should be a high priority of the disarmament agenda. My Government is proceeding with its domestic procedures for the ratification of the CTBT next year. At the same time, we welcome the decision made at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva last month to establish an ad hoc committee on the Fissile Material Cut-off Convention. We also call upon all nuclear-weapon States faithfully to comply with their obligations to undertake nuclear disarmament pursuant to article VI of the NPT.

We stress once again that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a State party to the NPT, should fully comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement. It should also carry out its obligations to freeze its nuclear activities and eventually dismantle the related facilities in accordance with the Geneva Agreed Framework. In particular, it should cooperate closely with the IAEA in preserving necessary information related to its past nuclear activities. Furthermore, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to demonstrate its sincerity in upholding the Agreed Framework by guaranteeing full transparency with regard to the recently discovered underground facilities near Yongbyon.

For its part, my Government will make continued efforts, together with the United States, Japan and other parties concerned, for smooth progress in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project, pursuant to the Agreed Framework. As the

KEDO project contributes to the peace and security of the region, we look forward to continued political and financial support from the international community. We also believe that both Koreas should renew their efforts to implement the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of 1992.

My Government shares the grave concern of the international community over the launching of the rocket-propelled object by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 31 August. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ability to develop delivery means of weapons of mass destruction poses a serious threat to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and in North-East Asia. The international community should make concerted efforts to induce the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from conducting further missile development, testing and exporting.

Chemical and biological weapons are another category of weapons of mass destruction that requires our serious attention. We commend the valuable achievements of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons over the last year and a half. Regrettably, a number of countries presumed to possess chemical weapons, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, have not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We urge those States to do so without delay. My delegation also hopes for an early adoption of the Verification Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention.

In recent years, we have seen the United Nations peacekeeping operations expand their activities to such areas as repatriation of refugees, demilitarization and disbanding of armies, and the policing and monitoring of elections. While this trend can be viewed positively, my delegation is deeply concerned about the increasing number of victims among civilian volunteers and United Nations personnel. The Republic of Korea, while serving as a member of the Security Council last year, initiated a Council open debate on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees in conflict situations, which led to the adoption of a presidential statement. We hope that the Secretary-General's report on this topic, released this week, will renew the international community's awareness of this issue and lead to concrete follow-up measures.

My delegation is deeply disturbed by the recent increase in brutal international terrorist activities. The Republic of Korea will not tolerate any acts of terrorism, and urges all Member States to cooperate in devising effective international measures to combat terrorism.

On the threshold of the new millennium, the international community is encountering an increasingly complex set of challenges to peace and security. At this critical juncture, the Security Council needs to reform itself to adapt to the drastically changed international environment.

The Republic of Korea fully supports an expanded, more representative and democratic Security Council. However, no Security Council reform package will be feasible without universal support among Member States. In this regard, we hope that the Council reform package will be worked out on the broadest consensus possible, far exceeding the mandatory endorsement by two thirds of the members of the General Assembly. In this context, we note with appreciation the efforts of the Working Group on Security Council reform to seek a realistic and practical solution which should enjoy general agreement among Member States.

My delegation welcomes the reform efforts that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has made since taking office. The Republic of Korea has consistently supported the Secretary-General's reform initiatives and will continue to do so in our common efforts to revitalize the Organization in the years ahead. We hope that the Millennium Assembly, to be held in the year 2000, will serve as an opportunity to crystallize the visions and strategies needed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

We look forward to the twenty-first century with great expectations. The time ahead of us will undoubtedly pose daunting challenges. Of this, I am certain. But it also promises a bright future if we, together, can successfully rise to the occasion. The United Nations is a tool and a forum; it is a symbol — the best that we have — of our joint commitment to making the next century more secure, more humane and more hopeful than the last one. The Republic of Korea, together with other Member States, stands ready to make its due contributions towards these lofty goals.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to convey my sincere congratulations to Mr. Opertti upon his election as President of the General Assembly at this session and to

express my full confidence that he will lead its work wisely and ably.

It gives me pleasure as well to pay tribute to the wise leadership of the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, President of the Assembly at its last session, particularly in promoting the efforts for reform and renewal in the United Nations.

I would like also to salute the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who displayed his wisdom and expertise in dealing with world crises and for his outstanding contribution to increasing the efficiency of the Organization in order for it to keep pace with the changing times, contribute to the building of the new international order and avoid the pitfalls.

This is the next-to-last session of the General Assembly in this century. Let it be a session for reflection and preparation for the last session of the twentieth century, next year. Let us take stock of the international work of a whole century, its positive and negative aspects alike. Let us evaluate the achievements and innovations of mankind, where it failed and why. Let us list and analyse the work done and the progress made by the United Nations to create constructive international cooperation and establish peace. Let us also talk about what remains on the international agenda and what will be left for succeeding generations to finish and accomplish.

In the Charter of the United Nations, we determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Have we done so? Where did we succeed, where did we fail, and why? We also reaffirmed our faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity of nations and human beings. How far have we gone in translating this solemn reaffirmation into a reality? We committed ourselves to promoting social progress and better standards of life, and to using the United Nations for the promotion of the social and economic advancement of all peoples. Have we honoured that commitment? We determined to practise tolerance and live together in peace and neighbourliness. Have we achieved that? We determined to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and not to use armed force except for common interest. Has this determination come true? Have we achieved what we determined to do?

Immediately after the end of the cold war in the late 1980s, some spoke of "the clash of civilizations". This is a dangerous theory that concerns humanity and the course it will chart for itself — whether conflict and conflagration or coexistence and peace. We, the representatives of the international community, cannot, at this historical juncture, ignore such a dangerous argument and a destructive theory that runs counter to the common work and collective obligations we agreed upon for international life. We, the children of the twentieth century, must deal with this theory and respond to it clearly. We cannot let such a negative call go without a response or correction. What President Clinton said in his address before the Assembly, rejecting this theory and expressing respect for Islamic civilization, is really worthy of consideration and appreciation.

In our opinion, we must offer the next century our confident view that we are one community based on pluralism — intellectual, religious and cultural pluralism and diversity. We must reaffirm that this diversity does not prejudice the unity of the international community. Rather, it strengthens that unity, making the international community a dynamic whole based on healthy competition, positive coexistence and a common appreciation for the achievements of the many societies that constitute the international community. Our community cannot be dependent on the achievements of one single society or tend to follow one single culture. The true path lies in positive interaction, complementarity and coexistence among civilizations. It does not lie in the creation of causes for conflict or in fanning the flames of confrontation and of clash between civilizations. If this is allowed to happen, it will create a dangerous hotbed of world tension and will ultimately result in a grave loss for one and all.

Once again we are at a historic juncture where a strong message from this generation is indeed necessary. We want to see the rights of people and nations upheld without differences as to priorities and definitions. We want rational disarmament and an end to the arms race without distinction or discrimination. We want genuine development that does not entrench poverty or ignore its causes. We want a clean environment, a science that benefits all and a technology whose achievements and applications are beneficial to all. We want a common position in the face of international terrorism. We want freedom and liberation for all peoples and a firm stand in the face of the forces of oppression, racism and occupation. We want a commitment to the rule of law and respect for established norms and for the purposes and principles we consensually consecrated in the Charter of the United Nations.

In order to evaluate the experiences of the past and to chart our future course, I propose that this session create a committee to commence drafting a clear statement to history to be issued at the close of the next session. This statement should include our assessment of the past and our vision of the future. It should be issued a few days before the end of the century and the beginning of the new millennium.

The world today is passing through a stage of chaos, and there is a general feeling of discontent. Wars, terrorism, backwardness, racism, religious intolerance: are these the remnants of past eras? Or are they the result of practices that continue to plague our societies? Or are they an integral part of the fabric of human life? Or are they the result of globalization and the factors of tension and instability contained in the new world order?

I believe we all sense the instability in international life. We have witnessed and continue to witness widespread acts of terrorism throughout all continents of the world. We have witnessed widespread extremism in various faiths and widespread injustice in various societies. All this points to the fact that richness and poverty, despite their undisputed importance as two of the facts of life, do not constitute the only causes of world instability. There are other causes, foremost among which is the policy of double standards, the lack of democracy in international relations, the brazen call for a clash of civilizations and the varying interpretations of the principles of legality. All these elements lead to the feeling of discontent, indeed, to the general feeling of insecurity.

I believe it is incumbent upon us to consider this matter. These questions call for a clear answer because the challenge is enormous, and the results could therefore be grave. We are all in the same boat. This responsibility is not the responsibility of any one society. If globalization and universality are much talked about, this should mean that they call for a sharing of responsibility.

I would like to deal briefly with some of the central issues that occupy our minds at this stage.

I shall start with terrorism. Some note, and rightly so, that this international crime against all societies is perpetrated using tight organizations, facilitated sometimes by circumstances in which some have misguidedly supported certain groups by encouraging and dealing with them until those groups turned against them. This is a lesson we must learn in order to avoid its repetition. Furthermore, some have noted, and rightly so, that the hand of terrorism has struck more than one place at the same time: Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Omagh in Ireland. Before then, that hand of terrorism struck many places in the world, for different motives, certainly. But the phenomenon is one and the same, and it is intolerable. We must reflect upon this matter together.

In this regard, I would like to underline the importance of the legislation enacted by the British House of Commons on dealing with the acts of conspiracy committed on British territory, of the proposal of President Jacques Chirac of France on controlling the financing of terrorist groups, and of what was said by President Clinton in his statement before the Assembly in this regard. I find it important also in this connection to put before the Assembly the call of President Hosni Mubarak to convene an international summit under the auspices of the United Nations. The summit should direct the international community to deal with terrorism legally, politically, economically and technologically. This call was supported in the final communiqué of the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. I suggest that the General Assembly consider the Egyptian call for the proposed summit. I also call upon the Secretary-General to start working towards its convening.

Turning to disarmament, allow me to say that recent developments have proved the shortcomings of the nuclear non-proliferation regime in its current form, which lacks universality. This reaffirms the need for urgent and serious steps to remedy that shortcoming, and to strengthen the efficiency of the regime through achieving its universality and avoiding the policy of double standards; otherwise, we will end up with a state of deep mistrust and an arms race that would in turn lead to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons.

For the last three decades, Egypt has consistently called for making the Middle East free from nuclear weapons. This call was further reinforced by its 1990 initiative to make the region free from weapons of mass destruction. Today, we reiterate this call with a view to maintaining peace and security in the region.

Starting from this same premise, Egypt, together with seven other States, recently proposed a new agenda to strengthen the international commitment towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction, an initiative we invite the Assembly to support. In this connection, allow me to place on record the call of President Hosni Mubarak to convene an international conference to

consider the elimination of those weapons from the whole world within an agreed time-frame. I invite members of the Assembly to work together in order to translate that call into a reality.

I now move to the question of the reform of the United Nations. Here, the premise of the Egyptian policy is the same as that adopted by the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban: we call for commitment to the principles of the Charter and international law as a common position on the agenda for reform.

Here, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his ideas and initiatives in this regard. I would also like to reaffirm what the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted concerning the importance of taking into account the views of the Member States of the United Nations in the implementation of the reform policies and the reaffirmation of the pivotal role of the General Assembly in the decision-making process, as the main democratic framework of the United Nations.

Concerning the Security Council, the position of Egypt is based on the same elements adopted by the non-aligned States as follows: first, the need to deal with the questions of the reform of the working methods of the Security Council and the expansion of its membership within an integrated framework; secondly, increasing the membership of the Security Council by no fewer than 11 members and the allocation of a number of permanent seats for developing countries, with strict observance of the principles of equitable geographical distribution and equality of States; thirdly, the unacceptability of any attempt at a partial or selective expansion of the membership of the Security Council; fourthly, the inadmissibility of any predetermined time-frame to complete the process of restructuring the Security Council; and lastly, the need for any resolution that would result in amending the Charter, the so-called framework resolution, to be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the States Members of the United Nations, in accordance with Article 108 of the Charter.

In addition, Egypt is committed to the decision of the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Harare in 1997 on the allocation of five non-permanent seats and two permanent seats for the African continent, to be rotated in accordance with agreed criteria of the Group of African States.

On the subject of the reform of the United Nations, I would like to refer to a matter that was the subject of extensive deliberations in the United Nations and in the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement — namely, the sanctions imposed by the Security Council. As the ultimate objective of such sanctions is to influence certain political regimes to bring them into compliance with the rules of international legality, it is therefore necessary that all means under Chapter VI of the Charter be exhausted before resorting to Chapter VII and its applications. The clarity of the objective of imposing sanctions and a thorough consideration of their consequences in the short and long terms, including human suffering, are of paramount importance.

An excessive imposition of sanctions, or their perpetuation without acceptable reason or a clear time-frame, will erode their credibility and the commitments made to applying them. Therefore, there is a need for patience, prudence and a determination of the time-frame of sanctions.

I now turn to the Middle East, which is suffering from numerous problems, some chronic and others fairly recent, which we hope will not also become chronic ones. I am referring here to the situation of Iraq, which must reach its natural conclusion: the lifting of the sanctions through implementation of the Security Council's resolutions and in accordance with their provisions. This requires goodwill, proper conduct and the establishment of constructive and stable cooperation between Iraq and the mechanisms of the Security Council. This is a shared responsibility, not the responsibility of one party alone. Needless to say, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is an integral part of their elimination in the region as a whole, as was indeed reflected in Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

I would also like to refer to the Lockerbie issue and express our satisfaction at the recent positive development of the situation by the consent of the parties to that yet-to-be settled dispute. This represents significant progress towards the trial of the two suspects and establishing the truth. We all hope that progress will be made, in good faith, as soon as possible within the framework of the contacts made by the Secretary-General and that an agreement will be reached on the required procedures and guarantees. Thus, the whole matter will be put behind us, the sanctions imposed on Libya will be lifted and a long overdue end to a period of tension will come to pass.

At another level, we believe that the region must avoid anything that could add to its tensions: declarations

of strategic alliances that create discord and lead to counter-alliances; sneaking into the nuclear club, which will lead to an arms race in the region, unless Israel, like all other States of the region, accedes to the Non-Proliferation Treaty; the lack of a solution to the problems and disputes of sovereignty, foremost among which is the question of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf; and attempts at partitioning and jeopardizing the unity and territorial integrity of States, as is the case with Iraq and Sudan.

As for the peace process, which is about to collapse, the situation is indeed grave, not only because of the deadlock it has reached, but also because the roots of the problem go much deeper than that. The deadlock is related to the negative change in the policy of Israel, which believes that the current international situation enables it to impose its exaggerated demands on the Arab parties and to impose an Israeli peace on the Middle East. This is probably due to the belief which it has evolved, namely that no person, no Government and no State would be able to stand in its way, pressure it or refuse its demands.

We reject this policy, which uses security considerations to justify occupation, thus stripping security requirements, which could be legitimate, of any meaning. Such requirements could have been negotiated and reasonable ones accepted on a reciprocal basis. Yet the validity, true weight and credibility of those Israeli security requirements have become dubious. Egypt, the first Arab State to establish peace with Israel and the largest one with a role in the Middle East and the Arab and Islamic worlds, cannot accept such negative policies, which will drive the region once more towards the flames of tension, conflict and instability.

We have made peace with Israel. The Arab States have moved towards the same objective on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which is based on the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and on Israel's right to live in peace within its borders — which are, of course, the borders and the lines of June 1967 — as well as on the basis of the Madrid framework, namely, the principle of land for peace. With respect to the Palestinians, the Oslo accord provides for significant Israeli withdrawals before the final status negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides can begin.

At their summit meeting in Cairo in 1996, Arab leaders at the highest level expressed the commitment of Arab States to the peace process, since Arab-Israeli peace is a strategic objective to be achieved under international legality. But it requires a corresponding commitment from Israel to follow the road to peace in a manner that restores the rights and the occupied territories of the Palestinians and ensures balanced and equal security to all the States of the region, in accordance with the principle of land for peace.

The Arab summit decided that any disruption by Israel of these principles and bases of the peace process; that any reneging on the commitments it has made and agreements reached on the same path; and that any procrastination in their implementation will only set back the peace process. The attendant dangers and repercussions of such actions would relaunch the region into the spiral of tension and compel the Arab States to reconsider the steps they have taken towards Israel within the framework of the peace process. The Israeli Government alone would bear the full responsibility for such a development.

Regrettably, it has become evident that the Israeli Government is reneging on the commitments it has undertaken in the context of the Security Council's resolutions, the Madrid framework and the Oslo accord. This attitude logically compels us to take a forthright and determined opposition to Israel's negative position, which runs counter to the objective requirements for peace. If we do not, the effective international action necessary to deal with this grave situation will not be forthcoming.

We wonder what the Israeli Government really wants. The Arabs have given it acceptance, coexistence, peace and recognition. But it would seem that what the Israeli Government really wants is all of the above, plus most of the land and the privilege to disregard the rights of the Palestinians. This is simply unacceptable. Peoples have their dignity and the rights to their own land and to self-determination. No generation is entitled to cede such rights. They are the rights of all generations — past, present and future — throughout history.

We reiterate that Israel must reconsider its position and its policy. The international situation is ever changing. What may be imposed today without justice or balance will disintegrate tomorrow. We want a stable, enduring agreement. This can be achieved only once we agree on a comprehensive package that includes Israel's complete withdrawal from the territories of Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza in Palestine; the establishment of a Palestinian State; an agreement on the final status of Jerusalem and the fate of the Palestinian

refugees; an agreement on security requirements, without undue exaggeration; the recognition of Israel as a State; and coexistence with it as a member of the family of the Middle East, within the framework of normal relations. I repeat that all this must constitute a package deal that cannot be divided to serve the interests of one party at the expense of the others.

Does the Israeli Government recognize the importance of justice and legitimacy? Does it realize the grave and present danger of spurning this opportunity to achieve peace? Letting this historic opportunity slip away and entering the next century with the file of the Arab-Israeli conflict still open will lead to tension and instability not only in the Middle East, but in the international community as a whole. Historical experience has proven that tension knows no boundaries, that instability cannot be confined to one specific region and that international peace and security are indivisible.

The international community must therefore raise its voice against the setback of the peace process and play its role in salvaging it. We are not calling for an international trial. Rather, we ask the international community to play its role in safeguarding the bases of peace agreed upon unanimously in the Security Council and at the Madrid Conference, and in the consideration of the measures necessary to restore the process to its correct track and to avert the eruption of further crises in the future.

It was in this spirit that Presidents Hosni Mubarak and Jacques Chirac announced their initiative to convene a conference of States determined to save the peace. We must emphasize that this Franco-Egyptian initiative does not aim at replacing or hampering any current positive efforts. It aims, rather, at reinforcing these efforts and ensuring their success, particularly those of the United States, which we support as long as they seek balanced agreements.

Egypt accords equal attention to issues of the African continent. Today, we are faced with two urgent and serious matters. The first pertains to the Horn of Africa, namely, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We strongly support the mediation efforts, led by the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, to arrive at a peaceful solution and the continued cessation of military hostilities. In this way will normalcy be restored and peace established.

The second question is the situation in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here, the efforts made by the leaders of Africa and the United Nations Secretary-General continue to be important. Such efforts preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and establish positive relations between it and its neighbours in the larger context of a cessation of military operations and of interference in its internal affairs. They also require the maintenance of its national unity within rational democracy.

The situation in Africa is being dangerously aggravated by these problems and by the continent's grave socio-economic situation. This requires special attention, which we call on the international community and the United Nations to give.

In conclusion, I must refer to the phenomenon of globalization. We must face its challenges and address its negative aspects, while maximizing its benefits. A number of developing countries have successfully dealt with globalization and achieved their necessary integration into the world economy. At the same time, many developed countries have adopted covert protectionist measures and new conditionalities, such as environmental and labour standards and continue to maintain tariff barriers against the primary exports of the developing countries. These measures run counter to the equitable bases of the world trading system. This is an important issue which we must address in the context of evaluating past achievements and challenges, and of shaping a new international order.

These are the questions which Egypt wished to put before this session as a modest contribution to shaping a common vision that would inspire the march of humanity in the coming decades, during which we hope that justice, equality, progress and prosperity will prevail.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Cooperation of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Jacques F. Poos.

Mr. Poos (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): As previous speakers have done, I would like to convey to the President my sincerest congratulations on his election to the presidency at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that our Assembly will benefit greatly from his sense of authority and leadership. I also wish to express my gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his

commitment and perseverance in conducting our work during the fifty-second session.

The Secretary-General of our Organization is devoting tireless energy to opening up new avenues for our common efforts. He has emphasized the crucial importance of good communications to ensure that the United Nations will be a catalyst both for those directly involved in international life and for our peoples. We share that belief with him and encourage him in that respect.

Last Tuesday, members heard the statement of Mr. Schüssel, President of the Council of the European Union. He spoke on behalf of all of the countries of the European Union, and Luxembourg fully supports the views expressed.

The presence of representatives of 185 States in this Hall reflects our common concern to ensure balance and security among nations, but also within our societies. Our concern is to ensure the permanence of values to which we are all committed in an ever-evolving world. In the context of its mandate to preserve international peace and security, our Organization regularly asks whether it has the means to ensure that the general interest, as perceived by our citizens, prevails. Surely, we must not be overly ambitious. We are aware of the complexity and the magnitude of the situations we face, and that these impose limits on our action. Therefore we must focus our operations and provide an appropriate framework for them. It is also our duty to acquire the means to act effectively whenever our ineffectiveness or slow response would seem to negatively affect the weakest among us.

Luxembourg supports the efforts under way to provide our Organization with permanent structures and to make available to it forces prepared for rapid and effective intervention whenever the Security Council, guarantor of the preservation of peace and security, deems it necessary.

Our common efforts to make our world safer suffered a serious setback following the nuclear tests recently carried out by two major countries in South Asia. We noted with satisfaction that the representatives of India and Pakistan have just announced from this rostrum that their countries are prepared to join the international community by acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We invite them to proceed in that direction as quickly as possible.

Will these efforts appear absurd, given the endless pursuit of the tragic discussion about the disarmament of Iraq? This spring the Security Council endorsed the memorandum of understanding submitted to it following the Secretary-General's visit to Baghdad. Since then, such cooperation has been called into question. Such abrupt changes generate concern and discouragement and call into question the credibility of our Organization. It is the Security Council's responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure that its decisions in this area are fully respected.

The President returned to the Chair.

Our Organization is pursuing conflict prevention and peacekeeping. At the recent meeting between the United Nations and the representatives of regional organizations, the proposal for development of a culture of prevention was put forward. Progress has been made in the concept of mutually supportive institutions and on support for the initiatives taken at the regional and subregional level.

While it is desirable to support such initiatives and efforts, we must remember that the Charter confers principle responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council and that the Council must fully play its role. We welcome the fact that in 1998 the Council once again authorized two peacekeeping operations, one in Sierra Leone and the other in the Central African Republic.

The Ottowa conference on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines was undeniably an invigorating success in an area which constantly creates innocent victims. This treaty, which has just entered into force, will make it possible to save many human lives. The news that anti-personnel mines are again being sown in Angola and along the borders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is terrifying. Such action, if confirmed, must be condemned vigorously.

In Kosovo, the violence directed against the civilian population must end. It proves that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continues to follow paths which cannot but compromise progress in its integration into international and European structures. Armed action conducted by Albanian groups in Kosovo must also end. The scorn for human suffering displayed by the Serbian leaders and the extremists in Kosovo is incomprehensible.

A new status for Kosovo must emerge. It is inconceivable that such a status can emerge under the

sway of threat or, even worse, cold-hearted implacable violence, which would merely drive the wedge deeper to the point where the very idea of understanding would be absurd. As Security Council resolution 1199 (1998) requires, a political solution must be negotiated between the parties under the aegis of the international community. Firm cohesion between Europe, the United States and the Russian Federation should enable those in the region, as was the case previously, to address their future in a more rational and orderly way.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the extremist tendencies are on the decline. This political progress was rapidly reflected in concrete results achieved in the field, and today this war-torn country is engaged in reconstruction. It is comforting to note that a growing number of individuals charged with war crimes have been sent to the Tribunal at The Hague. The establishment and the functioning of the structures decided on in the context of the peace process are today becoming a reality.

The recent elections have confirmed this new realism. It is up to the international community to consolidate this trend, as it still appears to be fragile, and to ensure, in particular, the return of refugees and displaced persons. This latter question is particularly acute in Croatia and Albania.

Another key element for opening the way to a brighter future is a firm, unequivocal commitment by the regional parties and the international community. I refer to the peace process in the Middle East. Five years after the Oslo agreements, we must note the stagnation of the peace process, whose logic — the principle of land for peace — the current Israeli Government never really accepted.

The archaic and paralysing philosophy of refusal has unfortunately returned to the foreground; it is reflected in many initiatives which only increase tension, thus nullifying the efforts of those who advocate peace. The political leaders involved must reverse this trend so as to return to the good faith implementation of all the provisions of the Oslo agreements.

Our action, in that region and in others, must focus on convincing the parties involved that there is no alternative to peace.

It is regrettable that this central concept is also being called into question in a number of African regions. Tribal rivalries and resentments continue to supplant clearsightedness and the desire for good governance. In no case should the political leaders involved in the different flashpoints feel that their only choice is between submitting to events and shirking their responsibilities.

The struggles for influence and the war in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo are on the verge of degenerating into a regional conflict and bringing about a humanitarian catastrophe there too.

The causes of conflicts and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa call for a united response. The debate at ministerial level that the Security Council has just held on these topics was very helpful. The General Assembly will have occasion to consider this question over the course of its fifty-third session, with a view to a discussion on possible measures. While the future of Africa depends first of all on the efforts of Africans themselves, the international community must be actively involved in order to ensure respect for international law, and in order to carry out its duty of solidarity.

Recent events, with the terrible bombings perpetrated in Africa and Northern Ireland, remind us once again of the intolerable nature of terrorism. It is up to the international community to acquire an effective means of combating this scourge on an international level, and to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts answer for their crimes before the competent courts. We owe it to ourselves to put a definitive end to the culture of impunity in connection with terrorism.

Another priority for our General Assembly is reform of the Organization. We welcome the fact that some progress was made during the fifty-second session. But reform cannot be an isolated event; it must become a process that underlies all of our action. We pledge to continue actively supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General, and to add our efforts to his, with a view to giving the United Nations the capacity to respond in a flexible and evolving way to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Any in-depth reform of the system will remain fragile so long as the Organization lacks sound and reliable financial resources. The grave financial crisis which the Organization has experienced for a number of years must be considered as a threat to the effectiveness of the whole. Our proposed reforms will be consolidated only when all Member States have agreed fully to meet their obligations under the Charter by paying their arrears to the United Nations, and by paying on time and

unconditionally the full amount of their obligatory contributions, both to the Organization's regular budget and to the peacekeeping budget.

The maintenance of security and peace in the world cannot be dissociated from the international community's efforts on behalf of development.

When we see entire regions, even subcontinents, experiencing poverty and malnutrition, there is a shocking imbalance which will soon pose a threat to the security of the States concerned and to respect for the fundamental rights of the human individual.

When we see that generations of young people can hope for no future but unemployment or a frustrating inactivity, there exists a flagrant and unjust imbalance which will be a source of conflict.

When we see social categories permanently deprived of education and health care, that, too, is an imbalance to which we cannot be indifferent.

The economic, financial and social crisis currently besetting South-East Asia, Latin America and Russia has exacerbated this trend. Rationally, the international community must acknowledge that the means of intervention traditionally, and almost mechanically, employed to overcome economic crises have proved ineffective this time.

In his work *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme*, Fernand Braudel pointed out the profound source of this crisis:

> "the emergence of a savage capitalism, as distinct from what we consider to be a market economy".

A market economy, and particularly a social market economy, cannot do without a stable State capable of regulating competition and protecting the weak.

The strengthening or restoration of a democratic, working State in the countries in crisis seems to me to be an absolute priority.

The international community cannot shirk the obligation to shoulder its responsibilities and lend a strong hand. It will do this not only because of its duty of solidarity, but because the interests of one and all are linked.

Another area in which the interdependence of our objectives is particularly visible and tangible is that of the management of the world's natural resources. It is clear that we need to be ambitious when it comes to the long-term management of our environment.

Last year we met here in special session to undertake an initial evaluation of the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Conference on Environment and Development a little over six years ago. At Rio de Janeiro and during last year's evaluation session we defined the concept of a world partnership for sustainable development, a partnership respecting the fact that the protection of the environment cannot be dissociated from the economic and social development process.

Undeniable progress has been made in recent years: the entry into force of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. But it must be acknowledged that the world environment has continued to deteriorate.

Accordingly, it is essential to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted in Rio de Janeiro.

Luxembourg intends to shoulder its share of this responsibility. Accordingly, we have undertaken, in the context of the commitments made by the European Union at the Kyoto Conference, to reduce our emissions of six greenhouse gases to 28 per cent below 1990 levels by the year 2012.

In the context of the Biodiversity Convention, we also plan to establish a national network of protected areas covering 10 per cent of our national territory.

The goal of managing the world's material resources as a good parent would reflect an atavistic concern, that of guaranteeing security through careful preparation for the future, in particular through suitable education.

The recent Lisbon Conference devoted to the problems faced by young people rightly emphasized the need to provide training that is suited to the job market so as to prevent unemployment and marginalization. Such training must include education about responsibility. We therefore welcome the fact that the Lisbon Declaration commits Governments to ensuring the participation of young people in programmes that concern them. In that

way we can come closer to democratic civic education based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens and on the participation of young people in civil society.

Luxembourg has undertaken a long-term effort to make its own contribution to providing funds for development. Our efforts are aimed at attaining the target set by the United Nations of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance before the end of the millennium. Our efforts occupy an important place in the struggle against poverty, which is one of the main obstacles to development. At present our contribution is 0.56 per cent of gross national product and is equivalent to official development assistance of $195 per capita. According to those criteria, Luxembourg is fifth among donor countries in the Development Assistance Committee.

Fifty years ago our Organization adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the first time, a universal organization declared its determination to place respect for human rights at the heart of international relations. Since then, we have made considerable progress towards ensuring recognition for the universal value of such rights and their effective enjoyment.

Several international instruments have been added to the Universal Declaration so as to focus more precisely on what human rights represent and to ensure that the citizens of all countries of the world effectively enjoy these rights. Our Organization has established the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights, and concern for human rights now underlies all of its activities. This progress leads us to believe that human rights will find the central and permanent home at the heart of international life that they deserve.

We also note that the Criminal Tribunals established by the United Nations to bring to trial those accused of crimes committed during recent wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have recently been able to strengthen their authority and the scope of their action. This affirmation of their importance played a considerable role in the preparation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. I sincerely welcome the positive conclusion of the work of the recent Rome Conference. At the same time, I should like to emphasize the fact that the entire international community has given that new institution strong and constant support.

The end of the culture of impunity represents a decisive turning point in international relations at the end of this century. But this turning point will be convincing only if the Members of our Organization display a commitment to provide the new Court with the necessary credibility.

In this commemorative year, we must ensure that our achievements are assessed in depth and that we avoid complacency in the field of human rights. Only in this way will it be possible to expand the base on which we can build the values that the international community has so often said it is prepared to ensure for humankind as a whole.

I am confident that the United Nations will remain capable of steadfastly pursuing the attainment of the great objectives it has set itself: to serve men and women, ensure respect for their rights, preserve them from the scourge of war and lead them towards development and fulfilment. Luxembourg's support will certainly not be lacking.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, His Excellency The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, on whom I now call.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. With your experience and dedication to the goals of this Organization, you will guide us wisely and effectively in our work this year.

And important work it is, for as the century draws to a close, our security is more precarious than ever. The spectrum of threats is wide and growing. Traditional dangers persist, including the proliferation of weapons. But new threats — terrorism, crime and drugs — arise from a world in which the face of conflict has changed. Economic and social insecurity for the majority of our global population is on the rise. Increasingly, it is the well-being of individuals that is directly at stake.

(*spoke in French*)

There is an urgent need for solutions. The interdependence of all of our lives is unprecedented. It is essential for us to work together to confront these challenges. This means working through a vibrant United Nations. For Canada, the universal values set out in the Charter have acted as our moral compass in setting our global agenda. The United Nations system serves as the instrument in achieving our goals.

(spoke in English)

At the same time we recognize that the United Nations faces its own worries, and it, too, must change. But a strong, reinvigorated United Nations is still the best foundation for the future. As the contours of that future emerge, there is reason for hope. While old realities of power persist, a new system based on humanitarian standards, practices and law based upon needs and human security is beginning to show through.

Perhaps this new reality can best be seen in the common effort to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. The Secretary-General has hailed the adoption of the Ottawa Convention as an unprecedented achievement — one accomplished through a unique partnership of non-governmental organizations, Member States and international groups working together to eliminate a weapons system that victimizes the innocent.

Last week, Burkina Faso deposited the fortieth ratification of the treaty, thereby crossing the threshold needed to bring the treaty into force. This treaty, which has already attracted 130 signatories and 41 ratifications, will become part of the international legal framework as of 1 March next year. We welcome the offer by Mozambique to host the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention. We continue to urge those who have not done so to sign and ratify the Convention and join in this international endeavour.

But entry into force is just the first important step in bringing the treaty to life. Now we have to meet the treaty's goals. An effective coalition for action must work together in this next phase to take the mines out of the ground and to help the victims. The United Nations, through its mine action service, will mobilize and coordinate the efforts of the international community.

At the signing of the treaty on landmines in Ottawa last December, countries pledged $0.5 billion for mine action. My own Government has allocated $100 million as Canada's contribution to rid the world of these very cruel weapons. We have already put the money to work in some of the most severely affected States, with projects in Mozambique, Cambodia, Bosnia and Central America. Now we must put everyone's resources to work.

Landmines are not the only weapons that take a tragic, disproportionate toll on civilian populations. Small arms and light military weapons — cheap and easy to transport, smuggle or hide — have become the tools of choice for smugglers, terrorists and criminals.

The challenges arising from the proliferation and widespread abuse of small arms and light weapons are complex. But the impact on all of us, especially the most vulnerable, is direct and devastating. Eighty per cent of the victims are women and children. There are no easy solutions and no shortcuts. We cannot, however, afford to shrink from facing such a pervasive threat to our security. In Canada we pursue a three-pronged approach, dealing with the legal trade, illicit trafficking and peace-building challenges of small-arms proliferation. We hope, by working with others in the United Nations, to see the use of this terrible weapon come to an end.

Illegal drug-trafficking also threatens our peoples' security. The drug trade affects governance, undermines human rights and promotes cross-border conflicts. That is why Canada has proposed a Foreign Ministers' dialogue group in the Americas. We hope that this will be a forum which can provide guidance and generate ideas to help us curtail the collateral impact of the drug trade on Governments and on society. These and other emerging threats to our security, including terrorism, crime and environmental degradation, affect every one of us but are beyond the reach of any of us alone. They demand global, integrated solutions, which the United Nations is best suited to provide. The International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, concluded last year, ongoing work in developing a convention on transnational organized crime and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — all show that we are capable of working together to enhance our human security.

Moving the human security agenda forward also requires that we redouble efforts to address the root causes of conflict and risk. Peace and stability are indispensable to security, but they are not, regrettably, humanity's birthright. They must be built. Two years ago, we launched the Canadian Peace-building Initiative. Its objective is to address the unique challenges of societies recovering from conflict. Through this initiative, projects have been undertaken in Guatemala to assist civil society to implement the peace agreements, in Bosnia to promote awareness of the peace accords, in Mozambique to support a programme to exchange weapons for farming tools, and in West Africa to support the initiative led by Mali to promote a West African arms moratorium.

These are small steps, certainly, but constructive ones in working locally to build peace.

Today, I am pleased to release a report entitled "Peace in Progress", which documents the results obtained to date and the wide range of partners with whom we have worked. As the title suggests, Canada intends to carry on with its partners in empowering those working to build peaceful and stable societies in their own countries.

It has been a half-century since a distinguished Canadian international civil servant, John Humphrey, wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then over 60 international human rights instruments have been adopted. Countries have shown a new and welcome willingness to cooperate with the international human rights system.

But we must build on that progress, and one of the most important ways that the Assembly can make its contribution this year is to support a strong United Nations declaration on human rights defenders to protect those who are protecting those whose human rights are being abused.

(spoke in French)

The growing integration of human rights, including women's rights, into all other aspects of United Nations activity is a recent and important breakthrough. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the conditions exist to achieve progress in attaining the goals set out by its drafters. This is good news. However, a review of the human rights situation around the globe makes it painfully clear that we remain far short of these goals.

We need to take advantage of the momentum that this anniversary presents. The United Nations human rights system must be assured of both the political support of the membership and increased regular budget financing if it is to do the job we have entrusted to it.

(spoke in English)

The growth of intra-State conflicts caused by differences of religion, language, race or ethnicity has reinforced the need to protect marginalized groups. To do so, both Governments and civil society must have ready access to information about human rights situations around the world. To this end, Canada has launched for the record an annual report drawn from United Nations sources, which we are making available on the Internet to provide constant updated information concerning human rights around the globe.

Certainly, of those at risk from conflict, none are more at risk than children. The targeting of children in warfare — both as fighters and as victims — is intolerable. The ground-breaking efforts of Graça Machel and the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, merit special and ongoing support.

Enhancing human security also requires establishing legal instruments. The agreement in Rome to establish the International Criminal Court is a major fundamental step towards that goal. This Court will help to deter some of the most serious violations of international humanitarian law. It will help give new meaning and global reach to protecting the vulnerable and the innocent. By isolating and stigmatizing those who commit war crimes or genocide and removing them from the community, it will help end cycles of impunity and retribution. Without justice there is no reconciliation, and without reconciliation there can be no peace.

We need to move forward urgently in making the Court a reality. We should begin during this session of the General Assembly to bring the Court into operation. We who have supported the Court should ratify the Statute as soon as possible. We must also work to understand and address the concerns of those States that remain hesitant about the Court — without diluting its effectiveness. Ultimately, we must ensure that we have an institution that will be credible, responsible and effective.

Respect for civil and political rights is necessary, but in itself is not sufficient to create the conditions for stable societies. Stability also requires economic and social well-being.

Regrettably, statistics show that countries with the lowest income are much more likely to fall victim to violent conflict than others. The number of people whose basic human needs are not being met remains unacceptably and dangerously high. A quarter of the world's people live in severe poverty; more than 800 million face malnutrition; 180 million children under the age of 14 work as child labourers. As the United Nations human development index makes clear this year, the gap between the haves and the have-nots continues to grow.

Countries overburdened by debt are less likely to be developed and more likely to succumb to conflict. Reducing the debt of the least developed nations allows them to devote more resources to basic human needs. That is why at the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Ouagadougou I announced a $20 million contribution to the African Development Bank to support the most heavily indebted African countries. That is also why Canada has forgiven virtually all development-related debt owed to us by the least developed countries — almost $1 billion — and why we encourage others who have not already done so to do likewise.

I think we all recognize that globalization presents opportunities, but it also exposes all of us, especially the most vulnerable, to greater economic and social insecurity. The international financial turmoil of the past months vividly demonstrates the impact these crises can have on the daily lives of the least fortunate. It means that we need to be sensitive to the social consequences of financial volatility. And when crisis strikes, the United Nations and its specialized agencies have a special responsibility to assist those most severely affected.

There is no greater threat to our security than nuclear proliferation. In 1945, Canada, despite the experience of the most destructive war in history, decided to forgo the nuclear option even though, as a participant in the Manhattan Project, we had the technical capability and material capacity to build our own nuclear weapons. In 1968, the Government of Canada confirmed that decision and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Every subsequent Canadian Government has reaffirmed that commitment, and we have spent much diplomatic effort to persuade others that nuclear weapons are the problem, not the solution.

The non-proliferation regime has enhanced everyone's security. The credibility of that regime has been severely tested over the years, but particularly over the past six months. India's and Pakistan's nuclear tests put the entire non-proliferation regime in jeopardy. Nuclear testing undermines the basic goals and objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Testing puts all of us, not least the people of the testing countries themselves, at greater risk. Therefore, there can be no condoning these actions.

And there must be no rewards. We must not legitimize the claims of would-be nuclear Powers, or confer any new status on proliferators. We listened carefully to the presentations of the Presidents of India and of Pakistan this week and we welcome the indications they gave that they would sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. But it is important to reiterate that Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) calls upon India and Pakistan to sign the Treaty without conditions, to participate purposefully in the negotiations on a cut-off treaty on fissile materials, to stop the weaponization of their nuclear programmes, to impose strict export controls on nuclear technology and to embrace fully the non-proliferation regime. We urge them to do so.

In that spirit, we welcome India's and Pakistan's decision to relaunch their dialogue on Kashmir. We also recognize that preventing horizontal proliferation, while crucial, is no more important than preventing vertical proliferation. Nuclear disarmament is the other half of the nuclear bargain. That bargain is a balance of responsibilities and obligations undertaken by nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. Not all nuclear-weapon States have begun to fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the Non-proliferation Treaty, and we call upon them to fulfil their responsibilities.

As we all recognize, this period of globalization multiplies the challenges. It is Canada's conviction that a dynamic, responsive and flexible United Nations system is the best way, perhaps the only way, to meet these challenges.

(*spoke in French*)

To fulfil its leadership responsibilities, the United Nations must be assured of reliable and adequate funding. We cannot revitalize the United Nations so long as Member States, particularly the most wealthy and fortunate among them, contribute less to a system from which they demand more. Renewal can be achieved only if Member States pay their assessed dues, present and past due, on time and without conditions.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me now speak of the Security Council. The Security Council remains at the centre of what the United Nations is all about: protecting against conflict and human risk. However, the Council's legitimacy is increasingly being questioned. To remain credible, the Council must re-examine traditional interpretations of its mandate. The Council needs to broaden its horizons in addressing emerging threats which impact on our security. Thematic debates on these issues, in which all

Member States can participate, are a good step. The addition of peace-building to the Council's range of responses to threats to peace and security is also welcome.

But the Council must also be more willing and more consistent in both how and when it becomes involved. The Council belongs to all Member States. It cannot be allowed to focus on solving the problems of one region and be indifferent to those of others.

The way the Council does its work must be more open and more transparent. For example, Member States involved in and affected by matters before the Council must be allowed to exercise their Charter rights. Far from constraining the Council's efficiency, this will improve the decisions it takes and render its actions more effective. The trend for permanent members increasingly to assume more control over the agenda, thereby marginalizing elected members, runs counter to the democratic principles which so inform our political institutions at the close of the twentieth century. The distinctions between permanent and elected members need to be narrowed rather than widened.

In sum, the Council we need for the next century must be more responsible, more accountable and less impenetrable. We hope that members will support Canada in advancing these aspirations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam.

Mr. Nguyen Manh Cam (Viet Nam) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am convinced that under your wise guidance the work of this session will be crowned with success.

I wish also to express our high appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, for his major contribution during the fifty-second session, which benefited from his effectiveness as President. I warmly congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his active contribution over the past year to the activities of the United Nations and to the reform process.

An eventful year has elapsed since the fifty-second session. While undergoing the intense and unpredictable impact generated by the unprecedented financial and monetary crisis, the world community has had to face tremendous challenges emerging out of tensions and conflicts in many corners of the world, out of policies of hegemony and imposition, and out of social injustice and the growing gap between rich and poor countries. However, peace, stability and cooperation for development continue to mark the prevailing international trend; that trend derives from the age-old aspirations of humankind and, above all, from the pressing demand of all peoples in the face of today's swiftly changing and complex world. That prevailing trend is becoming all the more established in a world context of growing interdependence and of the speedier pace of globalization and regionalization. This situation also presents the international community with as many challenges as opportunities. It must therefore be emphasized that least developed and developing countries are also confronted with considerable challenges, and that the world's development takes place in a context of various closely linked factors that have reciprocal impacts.

In the light of the many important advances that have been made in science and technology, no one can deny the role played by developed countries. But the overall development of the integrated global economy cannot occur without the active participation of developing countries, which account for the majority of the members of the international community.

Globalization is characterized principally by the rapid expansion of trade and economic relations and the swift movement of capital at the international level. We must nevertheless acknowledge that despite the twelve-fold growth in the global volume of trade since the end of the Second World War, the share of developing countries registered just a modest increase while that of least developed countries has been halved in the last two decades and currently stands at 0.4 per cent of the total value of international trade. Since the world's capital moves faster than trade grows, developed countries are the principal beneficiaries of these resources, with the rest going to a limited number of developing countries.

In an environment of economic opening up, characterized by the growing liberalization of trade and investment, developing countries — having undercapitalized industries, less efficient management and dilapidated equipment — have to confront unequal and relentless competition in which absolute superiority is enjoyed by countries that have advanced technologies at their disposal and to multinational corporations whose

revenues are sometimes even higher than the gross national product of some countries. Undoubtedly, this cannot but cause concern to the developing and least developed countries that are beginning their global and regional economic integration.

Additionally, although the current financial and monetary crisis began in East Asia, it is no longer an East Asian phenomenon, but has spread like an oil slick to the rest of the world and now resembles a dangerous storm causing unpredictable losses across many countries in different continents. This illustrates the negative side effects of globalization and provides additional proof of the fact that the greater the rate of globalization, the more interrelated both developed and developing economies become and the more they influence one another.

This situation calls for the international community's programme of action to include mutual cooperation between the developed countries and developing and least developed countries; and among countries that have strong economies, international institutions and the countries in crisis. It is only through this basic approach of mutual assistance that developing countries and countries in crisis will have an opportunity to join in the efforts of the developed countries to overcome the problems and make the global economy's growth more stable, which in the long run will benefit everyone. Obviously, such cooperation and mutual assistance must be based on mutual interest and respect. It can certainly be said that in a situation of generalized crisis, going to someone else's aid means saving oneself.

We believe that in adopting this approach, developing countries and countries in crisis should fully exploit their own domestic strengths and mobilize their existing potential to speed up and take advantage of international aid and cooperation. As far as external aid is concerned, we believe that the individual conditions of each recipient country should be taken into account in order to avoid the imposition of any remedy that might worsen its situation and cause unforeseen effects to social stability. Furthermore, we are convinced that in implementing these measures to stimulate liberalization, attention should be paid to the diversity of the global economy, as well as to the heterogeneous nature of national and regional economies. This is the only approach capable of ensuring the efficiency of our cooperation, the beneficial quality of our ties and our common prosperity.

In this light, we would like to express the following hopes.

More than ever, developed countries should facilitate access to their markets, accord most-favoured-nation status to developing countries — especially those countries which have been ravaged by the crisis or are suffering from its consequences — and include them in the Generalized System of Preferences. They should also support developing and least developed countries.

It is more necessary than ever to maintain the level of official development assistance. This is not only necessary to halt the downward trend, but also for donor countries to seek to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product devoted to development by donor countries. Moreover, this assistance is considered important for developing countries because it allows them to strengthen their energy resources and contributes to building both their economic and social infrastructures, elements which are essential for development and in order to attract foreign investments.

The role of multilateral institutions — particularly that of the United Nations — is very important in resolving the long- and short-term problems of developing nations. However, it is regrettable that United Nations assistance to developing countries is continuing to decline. We therefore welcome the adoption of measures by the United Nations to improve the quality of its development cooperation, as well as the initiative of the Secretary-General to create a Development Account using the savings realized from reductions in administrative costs.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), along with other international organizations and bilateral and multilateral donors, is currently working to find solutions to the urgent problems of developing and least developed countries. Viet Nam has in recent years benefited from their considerable assistance, which ranged from restructuring the economy into a market economy to specific activities in different areas of society, particularly in the battle to eliminate famine and reduce poverty.

More recently, the effective support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the implementation of a tripartite agricultural cooperation mechanism agreed among FAO itself, Viet Nam and certain African countries has yielded encouraging results. We hope that on the basis of that experience, the United Nations will focus more on development issues and create conditions that are more

favourable for providing assistance to the developing and less developed countries.

In recent years, we have witnessed the formation and expansion of linkages among countries at the regional, interregional, intercontinental and global levels. These multi-level linkages among States also give rise to favourable conditions for all nations to exploit their comparative advantages, and they give impetus to increased mutual assistance among various partners, which leads to more equitable and sustainable growth within each region as well as among regions.

Peace, stability and development are closely interrelated, like companions on the road to prosperity. Our own experience has taught us that a peaceful environment and political and social stability are indispensable for a nation to devote itself to achieving economic development. In turn, a more developed economy and improved living standards help strengthen political and social stability and thus preserve peace.

Two opposing tendencies have characterized the world security situation since the fifty-second session. On the one hand, numerous events have shown a continuing trend of peace and improved relations among countries, as evidenced by fact that the peaceful settlement of certain decades-long conflicts is under way and that relations among nations, including major Powers, continue to improve. On the other hand, we are witnessing on a daily basis bloodshed and confrontation in many regions, from the Middle East to Africa, from the Balkans to South Asia, and so on.

The arms race continues unabated. One terrorist act follows on the heels of another. The list of countries to be "punished" is not getting any shorter, and the direct victims continue to be the elderly and women and children. Our planet is thus not yet out of the reach of the Damocles sword of insecurity.

The painful lessons of the twentieth century — a century replete with conflicts and wars, including the two World Wars, which claimed tens of millions of lives — and the burning desire of humankind for a better life on the eve of the new century require that we all redouble our efforts to achieve a solid and lasting peace.

In today's world, such a peace will be achieved only if every people and every State — large or small, rich or poor, wherever its location — make every effort in jointly working towards it. Such a peace can be achieved only if it is based on a strict observance in international relations of the principle of respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-intervention in one another's internal affairs; the non-use or threat of use of force; and sanctions.

Such a peace will be established only when the goal of total disarmament is achieved, first and foremost through the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. In this spirit, all States must put an end to the production, testing, stockpiling, proliferation, use or threat of use of these weapons.

South-East Asia, as an integral part of the planet, is affected by current global developments. In these last 50 years, it has been a hotbed of conflicts and disputes and the scene of numerous bloody wars and crises. But today South-East Asia's luck is changing, and an atmosphere of peace, stability and cooperation for development prevails.

The membership of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has increased, bringing it closer to its goal of 10 member countries and helping to put an end to the region's historical divisions. The South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty has been signed. Nevertheless, problems remain, including sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, that must be resolved in order to ensure peace and stability for all countries in the region. We believe, however, that tensions can be avoided if all parties concerned practise self-restraint; refrain from aggravating the situation; ensure freedom of international maritime transportation; settle their disputes through negotiation on the 'basis of respect for international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and, in the immediate future, seek to identify patterns of cooperation acceptable to all sides. This is in line with the all-out efforts by the countries of the region to build neighbourly relationships of friendship and cooperation based on the principle of mutual respect.

In this spirit, as Cambodia's immediate neighbour, we welcome the success beyond expectations of the Cambodian elections last July, which were recognized to be free and fair by the entire international community. We sincerely hope that this will lead to the early formation of a new government in Cambodia that will set the Cambodian people on the road to building and developing their country in conditions of peace and stability.

Regrettably, East Asia in general and South-East Asia in particular, reputed in past decades to be the world's most dynamic economic growth area, are suffering an unprecedentedly serious crisis. This has led certain people hastily to declare the demise of the miracle of the East Asian development model and even go so far as to reject "Asian values". I would humbly suggest that such views are groundless. Indeed, the current crisis in East Asia is neither the first nor the last in the history of the market economy. Although some errors were made, the East Asia and South-East Asia development model has already provided quite a few valuable experiences and useful lessons.

Are not the virtues of studiousness, industriousness, thrift, intelligence, creativity and caring for one another eternal and universal values? Moreover, there remain substantial economic foundations, unique cultures and the achievements of the people of the region realized thanks to their hard work and creativity — not to mention other positive factors, such as the region's abundant natural resources, large internal market and major role in world politics and economics.

The existence and growth of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been another positive factor in the development of South-East Asia. Despite difficulties and challenges, ASEAN continues to become more unified, promote cooperation and play an active role in Asia and the Pacific and the world, not only through intensive interactions with dialogue partners and other international and regional organizations, but also by means of its vigorous work in different multilateral forums: the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia/Europe Meeting, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations itself.

After successfully hosting the seventh summit of the French-speaking community in November 1997, Viet Nam has the great honour to again play host — this time to the sixth ASEAN Summit, which will be held in Hanoi this December. The Summit, whose theme will be strengthening unity and broadening cooperation for a South-East Asia of peace, stability and balanced development, will adopt the Hanoi declaration and plan of action, which will guide South-East Asia as it enters the next century.

As a result of the factors I have outlined, we are firmly convinced that South-East Asia will soon overcome its difficulties and regain its previous pace of growth, and that the international community will continue to regard the region as a promising and reliable partner.

To build peace and promote development, it is urgently important to reform the United Nations, to make it more democratic and better adapted to confront the profound changes that have taken place in the world in the 50 years since the Organization was founded. We all agree that it is essential to reform the Security Council so that it will be more democratic, more transparent and more accountable to the General Assembly, the biggest and most representative forum of the community of nations. Viet Nam and its Non-Aligned Movement partners are committed to the position that the developing countries should be represented in the Security Council through permanent membership. In view of the legitimate interests of potential candidates, Viet Nam will support the rotation formula if a majority of countries accept it. Our country also supports the proposed limiting of the right of the veto — prior to abolishing it — to decisions relating to issues provided for under Chapter VII of the Charter.

This year the international community will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We have always regarded the Declaration as a great achievement of the world's peoples in their long struggle for fundamental rights, the most important of which are the right to live in peace, independence, prosperity and happiness, and with social justice, and the right to self-determination. It is unfortunate that the issue of human rights has sometimes been twisted to serve as a pretext for intervening and interfering in other countries' affairs. In this regard, Viet Nam greatly appreciates the position the Non-Aligned Movement expressed in the Durban Declaration, during its recent twelfth summit meeting, that human rights should not

> "be used as a political instrument for interference in internal affairs. ... They require an environment of peace and development, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Socio-economic rights, including the right to development, are inextricably part of real human rights."

Having suffered humiliation under foreign domination, having been ridiculed and having sacrificed innumerable lives in order to regain their human rights and dignity, our people will spare no effort to hold on to the fundamental rights they have regained.

To achieve the objective of becoming a prosperous people, a strong State and a just and developed society, the Vietnamese people are, and will remain, resolved to pursue their policy of renewal and to industrialize and modernize the country. To do this and promote peace, cooperation and development, Viet Nam will continue to pursue its foreign policy in support of independence, sovereignty, openness, multilateralism, diversification of foreign relations, and gradual global and regional integration. Thus Viet Nam will always be an active member of international and regional organizations. It will continue to contribute to the United Nations efforts for peace and development, particularly in its capacity as a newly elected member of the Economic and Social Council.

Humanity enters the new millennium with earnest hopes for a better and more prosperous life. At this historic turning point, we expect the United Nations to make greater efforts to achieve lasting peace and a climate of international cooperation supportive of the development of every nation. Viet Nam will spare no effort to contribute fully to the achievement of that lofty goal.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Indrek Tarand, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia.

Mr. Tarand (Estonia): Please allow me to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on your election to preside over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I wish you all the best in carrying out your duties. Let me also express my appreciation for his excellent work to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

As of today 462 days remain until the end of this century — a century which has recorded many phases in the development of the world. There have been times of confrontation and times of partnership, times of protectiveness and times of openness.

Seven years ago the walls of separation between the nations of East and West were torn down, creating opportunities for closer cooperation and economic integration. This also opened doors for nations to promote general welfare, mutual understanding and respect and the building of trust and confidence in one another.

As has been said about this moment in history, it is not so much that the borders between States are now open and can be freely crossed, but that they can be transcended. Distances and borders now have limited significance; the globe has become a universal village in its own right.

Today, the world economy appears to be sliding into a deep crisis. The countries that are suffering the most are the poorest. While I realize that globalization entails risks and challenges for economies and societies, I am convinced that there is no alternative. The only credible formula for a viable global economy is the promotion of freer trade through the abolition of trade barriers and the pursuit of sustained economic and democratic reform. Once starting on this path of reform, as difficult as it may be, there can be no stepping aside for shortsighted political consideration. Estonia's success is living proof of this.

Along with many other States, Estonia began its transition from a Communist regime to democracy and from a State-controlled economy to a free market in 1991. By 1997, Estonia had the highest economic growth rate in Europe, and preliminary figures for 1998 indicate that growth continues to be strong. Estonia's inclusion among the six countries to begin accession negotiations with the European Union is a recognition of its achievements in building a civil society and a well-functioning market economy.

In my country, we are proud of the European Union invitation. We regard the European integration process as among the most challenging yet most rewarding endeavours for our continent, today and in the distant future. European integration is not simply an effort to provide our citizens with the tools for success in a globalizing world; it is also a catalyst for greater openness throughout the continent. We are convinced that pursuing membership is in itself a strong guarantee for stable development, as it provides all applicants with a viable road map to reform.

Estonia greatly appreciates the help provided by the United Nations, other international organizations and a number of bilateral donors during the difficult early years of transition. Now that Estonia has entered into the post-transitional stage of its development, we believe it is time to start paying back. During the last eight years our Government and people have accumulated a wealth of experience and know-how on transition to a market democracy. We want to share this knowledge with countries at an early stage of their reforms, starting from building up a well-functioning border guard and finishing with successful monetary reform. Learning how to teach

and provide support is the final lesson before graduation, and this should be the goal of every reform country.

At any one time, there are 15 or 16 armed conflicts from around the world on the Security Council's agenda. Conflicts between and within States spread from Europe to Africa, from the Middle East to Asia. These conflicts are often driven by poor socio-economic conditions or ethnic nationalism. Estonia, recognizing the primary role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, supports efforts to maintain and strengthen the Organization's capacity to organize and effectively conduct its peacekeeping operations. In addition, we trust that the phasing out of gratis personnel, as mandated by the General Assembly, if handled properly, will not adversely affect the functioning of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

As a contributor of personnel, Estonia is committed to continuous participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are preparing to dispatch the joint Estonian-Latvian-Lithuanian battalion known as BALTBAT for its inaugural tour of duty in the near future. I would like to extend our thanks to all nations which have supported the establishment and formation of BALTBAT.

Estonia also intends to continue its involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF). As a conflict prevention measure, it welcomes and supports the enhanced cooperation of the United Nations with regional organizations or arrangements. In particular, deeper cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has great potential.

This year has already provided the international community with a number of landmark events. Among notable achievements were the twentieth special session, on the reduction and prevention of the illicit production, sale and demand of narcotic substances, and the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Estonia trusts that this fifty-third session of the General Assembly will reinforce the momentum captured in June and July in both New York and Rome, respectively.

On the other hand, the world community has witnessed a number of vicious terrorist attacks. It is time for everybody to understand a basic fact: terrorism is not politics; it is not religion — it is murder. Estonia deplores all terrorist activities wherever they occur, whatever the form or manifestation. We sympathize with all nations that have suffered these acts and call for even stronger solidarity to fight against such attacks.

We also must acknowledge that even on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the major accomplishments of our Organization, the world is still home to gross violations of human rights on all six continents. We therefore call for a sustained effort of the General Assembly, in close cooperation with regional organizations, to address this issue and to find the most effective mechanisms for early warning to identify and stop these violations.

Finally, a few words concerning the United Nations reform. We support reform based on the proposals by the Secretary-General. Estonia strongly believes that the aim of this reform must be to come to grips with a changing world as well as the principle of cost-effectiveness.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.